(3.)

AN ESSAY UPON THE *CIVIL WARS* OF FRANCE,

Extracted from curious MANUSCRIPTS.

AND ALSO UPON THE

EPICK POETRY

OF THE

EUROPEAN NATIONS,

From *HOMER* down to *MILTON.*

By Mr. de VOLTAIRE.

The SECOND EDITION, *corrected and revis'd by the* AUTHOR.

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ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

READER.

IT has the Appearance of too great a Presumption in a Traveller, who hath been but eighteen Months in England, *to attempt to write in a Language, which he cannot pronounce at all, and which he hardly understands in Conversation. But I have done what we do every Day at School, where we write* Latin *and* Greek, *tho' surely we pronounce them both very pitifully, and should understand neither of them if they were uttered to us with the right* Roman, *or* Greek *Pronunciation.*

I look upon the English *Language as a learned one, which deserves to be the Object of our Application in* France, *as the* French *Tongue is thought a kind of Accomplishment in* England.

Besides, I did not learn English *for my Private Satisfaction and Improvement only, but out of a kind of Duty.*

I am ordered to give an Account of my Journey into England. *Such an Undertaking can no more be attempted without un-*

derſtanding the Language, than a Scheme of Aſtronomy could be laid without the help of Mathematicks. And I have not a Mind to imitate the late Mr. Sorbieres, who having ſtaid three Months in this Country without knowing any Thing, either of its Manners or of its Language, thought fit to print a Relation which proved but a dull ſcurrillous Satyr upon a Nation he knew nothing of.

Our European Travellers for the moſt Part are ſatyrical upon their neighbouring Countries, and beſtow large Praiſes upon the Perſians and Chineſes, it being too natural to revile thoſe who ſtand in Competition with us, and to extol thoſe who being far remote from us, are out of the reach of Envy.

The true Aim of a Relation is to inſtruct Men, not to gratify their Malice. We ſhould be buſied chiefly in giving faithful Accounts of all the uſeful Things and of the extraordinary Perſons, whom to know, and to imitate would be a Benefit to our Countrymen. A Traveller who writes in that Spirit is a Merchant of a nobler Kind, who imports into his native Country the Arts and Virtues of other Nations.

I will leave to others the Care of deſcribing with Accuracy, Paul's Church, the Monument, Weſtminſter, Stonehenge, &c. I conſider England in another View; it ſtrikes my Eyes as it is the Land which hath produced a Newton, a Lock, a Tillotſon,

ſon, a Milton, a Boyle, *and many great Men either dead or alive, whoſe Glory in War, in State-Affairs, or in Letters, will not be confined to the Bounds of this Iſland.*

Whoſoever had the Honour and the Happineſs to be acquainted with any of them, and will do me the Favour to let me know ſome notable (tho' perhaps not enough known) Paſſages of their Lives, will confer an Obligation, not only upon me, but upon the Publick.

Likewiſe if there are any new Inventions or Undertakings, which have obtained or deſerved Succeſs, I ſhall be obliged to thoſe who will be ſo kind as to give me Informations of that Nature. And ſhall either quote my Authors, or obſerve a religious Silence, according as they think it proper.

As to this preſent Eſſay, it is intended as a kind of Preface or Introduction to the Henriade, *which is almoſt entirely printed, nothing being wanting but the printing of the Cuts, which I muſt recommend here as particular Maſter-Pieces of Art in their Kind: 'tis the only Beauty in the Book, that I can anſwer for.*

THE

THE HISTORY OF THE *CIVIL WARS* OF FRANCE,

Upon which the HENRIADE is grounded.

HENRY the Great King of *France* was born in the Year 1553. in *Pau*, a ſmall Town, the capital of *Bearn*; his Father, *Anthony* of *Bourbon* Duke of *Vendome*, was of the Royal Blood, and the Head of that Branch call'd *Bourbon*, which ſignifies *Muddy* from a Place ſo call'd, which fell to their Family by a Marriage with an Heireſs of that Name.

The Houſe of *Bourbon*, from *Lewis* the Ninth down to *Henry* the Fourth, had been almoſt neglected, and reduced to ſuch a Degree of Poverty, that the famous Prince of *Conde*, Brother to *Anthony* of *Navarre*, and Uncle to *Henry* the Great, had not ſix hundred Pounds a Year of his own.

The Mother of *Henry* was *Jeanne de Albret*, Daughter to *Henry d'Albret* King of *Navarre*, a good Man and a worthleſs Prince, rather ſlothful than peaceable; who bore with too much Reſignation the Privation of his Kingdom, which had been taken from his Father, by the *Pope*'s *Bull* ſupported by the Arms of *Spain*.

Jeanne, Daughter to ſo weak a Prince, had yet a weaker Huſband, to whom ſhe brought for a Portion, her little Principality of *Bearn*, and the empty Title of King of *Navarre*.

This Prince, who liv'd in a Time of Factions and Civil Wars, which required a ſteady Mind, was always fickle and wavering in his Conduct; he never knew of what Party he was, nor of what Religion; neither fit for a Court, nor qualified to be a General; He ſpent all his Life in courting his Enemies, and in undoing his Servants; deceived by *Catharine* of *Medicis*, baffled and oppreſſed by the *Guiſes*, nay, cheated always by himſelf.

ſelf. He was mortally wounded at the Siege of *Rouan*, where he was fighting the Cauſe of his Enemies againſt the Intereſt of his own Houſe; and he died, as he had liv'd uncertain and anxious.

Jeanne d'Albret was quite of an oppoſite Temper, full of Courage and Reſolution, feared by the Court of *France*, beloved by the Proteſtants, eſteemed by both. She knew all the ſuperior parts of Policy, but never the mean craft of Intrigue. It is very remarkable, that ſhe turned Proteſtant at the very time her Huſband turned Catholick; but from that Day ſhe was as firmly attached to her new Religion, as *Anthony* was wavering in his. By theſe means ſhe became the Head of one Party, whilſt her Huſband was the Slave and Bubble of the other.

She took the Education of her Son entirely in to her own Hands. *Henry* was born with all the Endowments of his Mother, and he improved 'em eminently afterwards. He had nothing of his Father, except that Eaſineſs of Temper, which in *Anthony* was Uncertainty and Weakneſs, but proved in *Henry* Benevolence and good Nature.

He was not brought up like a Prince in that effeminate Pride, which enervates the Body, weakens the Underſtanding, and hardens the Heart. His Food was

courſe, his Cloaths plain; he went always bareheaded, was ſent to School with the young Companions of his Age, climbed up with them among Rocks and Woods to the Tops of the neighbouring Mountains, according to the Cuſtom of that Country, and of thoſe Times.

While he was thus bred up with his Subjects in a ſort of Equality, without which a Prince is too apt to forget he is born a Man; Fortune opened in *France* a Bloody Seene, and through the ruins of that Kingdom almoſt overturned, and over the Graves of many Princes untimely cut of, prepared him a way to a Throne, which he was in time to conquer, and to reſtore to its Grandeur.

Henry the Second King of *France*, the Head of the Branch of *Valois*, was killed at *Paris*, in a Turnament, which was the laſt in *Europe* of theſe romantick and dangerous Sports.

He left four Sons, *Francis* the Second, *Charles* the Ninth, *Henry* the Third, and the Duke *d'Alençon*, all the unworthy Poſterity of the great *Francis* the Firſt, all (except *Alençon*) aſcended the Throne one after another; all lived ſhamefully, died untimely, and without Iſſue.

The Reign of *Francis* the Second was ſhort, but made famous by the firſt breaking out of thoſe Factions, and by the be-

beginning of thoſe Calamities, which laid waſte the Kingdom of *France* Thirty Years ſucceſſively.

He was married to that famous and unfortunate *Mary Stuart* Queen of *Scotland*, whom her Beauty and Weakneſs led afterwards into great Faults, greater Miſeries, and at laſt to a dreadful Death. She governed entirely her young Huſband *Francis*, a Boy of Eighteen, without Vice, and without Virtue, born with an infirm Body and a weak Mind.

Incapable of Governing by her ſelf. ſhe was totally directed by the Duke of *Guiſe* her Mother's Brother: he influenced the King by her means, and laid deep the Foundations of the Grandeur of his own Houſe. *Catherine de Medicis*, the late King's Widow, and the preſent King's Mother, began now to ſhew the firſt ſparks of her Ambition, which had been ſtifled during the Life of her Huſband: But being unable to prevail with her Son againſt a young Wife, whom he loved paſſionately, and againſt the powerful Credit of the Houſe of *Guiſe*, ſhe thought fit rather to be their Tool for a Time, and to eſtabliſh her own Authority by the help of their Power, than to contend in vain againſt it.

Thus the *Guiſes* domineered over the King, and the two Queens; and being

Maſters of the Court, were by courſe Maſters of the Kingdom, the one in *France* being generally a neceſſary Conſequence of the other.

The Houſe of *Bourbon* was groaning under the Oppreſſion of the Houſe of *Lorrain*; *Anthony* of *Navarre* bore patiently many ſcandalous Affronts; the Prince of *Conde*, his Brother, ſtill more bitterly abuſed, endeavoured to ſhake off the Yoke. He united in his great Deſigns with the Admiral *Coligny*, the Head of the Houſe of *Chatillon*: Theſe two Men were the moſt terrible Enemies that the Court had to fear; *Conde* more ambitious, more forward, more reſtleſs; *Coligny* of a more ſedate Temper, ſtricter in his Behaviour, fitter to be the Head of a Party, indeed as unſucceſsful in War as *Conde*, but repairing often by his Wiſdom what ſeemed irreparable, more dangerous after a Defeat, than his Enemies after a Victory; endowed beſides with as great a ſhare of Virtue as thoſe Times could permit, and as the Spirit of Faction could allow.

The Proteſtants began then to grow numerous, and to be conſcious of their Strength.

The Superſtition, the dull ignorant knavery of the Monks, the overgrown Power of *Rome*, Mens Paſſion for Novel-

velty, the Ambition of *Luther* and *Calvin*, the Policy of many Princes, all theſe had given Riſe and Countenance to this Sect, free indeed from Superſtition, but running as headlong towards Annarchy as the Church of *Rome* towards Tyranny. The Proteſtants had been unmercifully perſecuted in *France*; but it is the ordinary effect of Perſecution to make Proſelytes; their Sect increaſed every Day amidſt the Scaffolds and Tortures. *Conde*, *Coligny*, the two Brothers of *Coligny*, all their Adherents, all who were opreſſed by the *Guiſes*, turned Proteſtants at once; they united their Griefs, their Vengeance, and their Intereſts together, ſo that a Revolution both in the State and in Religion was at hand.

The firſt Enterprize was a Plot to ſeize the *Guiſes* at *Amboiſe*, and to get the Perſon of the King into their Hands: The Plot boldly contriv'd, ſecretly carried on, was diſcovered juſt as it was ready to be put in Execution; the *Guiſes* puniſhed the Conſpirators in the moſt cruel Manner, in order to terrify their Enemies from the like Attempts hereafter; more than ſeven hundred Proteſtants were executed. *Conde* was made Priſoner, impeached of high Treaſon, tried and ſentenced to Death.

During his Trial, King *Anthony* of *Navarre* his Brother, ſtirred up by his Wife, and by the *Colignis*, raiſed in *Guienne* a powerful Number of Gentlemen, as well Proteſtants as Catholicks, attached to his Houſe; he went with this Army through *Gaſcogne*; but upon a ſingle Meſſage that he received in his way from the Court, he diſmiſſed 'em all with Tears; *I muſt ſubmit* ſays he, *but I will Obtain your Pardon from the King. Go, and aſk Pardon for your ſelf*, anſwered an old Officer, *our Security is in the Point of our Swords.* Whereupon the Nobility, who followed him, returned home with Scorn and Indignation: *Anthony* purſued his Journey to the Court, there he ſollicited for the Life of his Brother, being not ſecure of his own; and he intreated every Day the Duke and the Cardinal of *Guiſe*, who received him ſitting with their Caps on, whilſt he was bareheaded and ſtanding.

Every Thing was now ready for the Death of the Prince of *Conde*, when on a ſudden the King fell ſick and died. The Circumſtances, the Suddenneſs of this Accident, the Propenſity of Mankind to believe that the untimely Deaths of Princes are never natural, gave courſe to the general Opinion, that *Francis* the Second had been poiſoned.

His

His Death gave a new turn to Affairs; the Prince of *Conde* was ſet at Liberty, his Party began to breathe, his Religion was propagated more and more, the Authority of the *Guiſes* declined, tho'not pulled down: *Anthony* of *Navarre* recovered a ſhadow of Authority, which was enough for him; *Mary Stuart* was ſent away into *Scotland*; and *Catherine de Mediois*, who now began to act the firſt part on the Stage, was declared Regent of the Kingdom during the Minority of *Charles* the Ninth her ſecond Son.

She found her ſelf intangled in a labyrinth of inextricable Difficulties, between two Religions and ſeveral Factions ſtruggling with each other, and contending for the Power.

She reſolved to deſtroy them all, if ſhe could, by their own Arms; ſhe cultivated the Hatred of the *Condes* againſt the *Guiſes*; ſhe promoted the Civil Wars, indifferent and impartial between the Church of *Rome* and that of *Geneva*, jealous only of her own Authority.

The *Guiſes*, who were zealous Catholicks, becauſe *Conde* and *Coligny* were Proteſtants, were a long while at the head of the Catholick Troops: Many Battles were fought, the Kingdom was laid waſte by three or four Armies at a time.

The

The Conſtable, *Anne de Montmorency*, was killed at the Battle of St. *Denis* in the Eightieth Year of his Age. *Francis* Duke *de Guiſe* was aſſaſſinated by *Poltrot* at the Siege of *Orleans*; *Henry* the Third then Duke of *Anjou*, a great Prince in his Youth, tho' a mean King in his Maturity, gained the Victories of *Jarnac* againſt *Conde*, and of *Moncontour*, againſt *Coligny*.

The Behaviour of *Conde*, and his Death in the Battle of *Jarnac*, are too remarkable not to be mentioned: He had been wounded in his Arm two Days before, and when he was juſt upon the point of engaging the Enemy, had the Misfortune to receive a Kick from a vicious Horſe of one of his Officers; his Leg was broken by the blow: the Prince, without expreſſing the leaſt Concern, ſaid to thoſe who were about him, *Gentlemen, learn by this Accident, that prancing Horſes are more dangerous than uſeful in a Day of Battle; let us go on*, purſued he, *the Prince of Conde, tho' whith a broken Leg, and an Arm wound up, will engage without Fear, when followed by you.* His Courage was not attended with Succeſs, he loſt the Battle, all his Army run away; his Horſe being killed under him, he ſtood upright as well as he could, againſt a Tree, alone, fainting with the ſmart of

of his Pain, but ſtill undaunted, and his Face turned towards the Enemy: *Monteſquiou*, Captain of the Guards to the Duke of *Anjou*, paſſed by the Place where the unfortunate Prince was ſtanding; he aſked, Who he was; and being told, 'Twas the Prince of *Conde*, ſhot him dead in cold Blood.

After the Death of *Conde*, *Cogligny* had upon him all the burthen of the Party. *Jeanne d'Albret*, then a Widow, committed her Son to his Care; the young *Henry* at Fourteen years of Age, went with him through all the Toils of War, and Hardſhip and Adverſity were his Tutors.

His Mother and the Admiral had no other view, than to ſettle their Religion in *France* independant from the Church of *Rome*, and to ſecure their own Authority from the Power of *Catherine de Medicis*.

Catherine had got rid already of many of her Rivals; *Francis* Duke of *Guiſe*, who was the more dangerous and obnoxious to her, as he was of the ſame Party, had been aſſaſſinated before *Orleans*. His Son, *Henry de Guiſe*, who made afterwards ſo great a Figure in the World, was but young; the Prince of *Conde* was dead, *Charles* the Ninth her Son, was broken

to

to her Hand, and ſubmiſſive to her Will; the Duke *d'Anjou*, afterwards *Henry* the Third, was intirely in her Intereſt. She feared no other Enemies but *Jeanne d'Albret*, *Coligny*, and the Proteſtants: She thought one Blow could deſtroy them all, and fix her own Power for ever.

She worked up the King, and even the Duke *d'Anjou* to her Deſign; all Things were agreed on, and the Snares prepared; an advantageous Peace was propoſed to the Proteſtants; *Coligny* tired with the Civil War accepted of it eagerly; *Charles*, in order to leave no room for any Suſpicion, gave his own Siſter in Marriage to young *Henry* of *Navarre*. *Jeanne d'Albret*, allured by thoſe deceitful Appearances, went with her Son, with *Coligny*, and with all the chief Proteſtants to Court. The Mariage was celebrated with Pomp, all the Endearments, all the Aſſurances of Friendſhip, all the Oaths which are ſacred among Men, were profuſely beſtowed by *Catherine*, and by the King; the reſt of the Court thought of nothing but Feaſts, Plays, and Maſquerades: At laſt, one Night (which was the Eve of St. *Bartholomew*, in the Month of *Auguſt* 1572.) at Twelve a Clock, the Signal is given, all the Houſes of the Proteſtants are forced upon at once; the Admiral *Coligny*, alarmed by the

ſhe Uproar, riſes out of Bed; a Troop of Aſſaſſines ruſh into his Chamber; one *Beſme*, a *Lorrainer*, bred up a Servant in the Family of *Guiſe*, was at their Head; he thruſts his Sword into the Admiral's Breaſt, and gives him a back ſtroke on the Face.

Henry, the young Duke of *Guiſe*, the ſame who framed afterwards the Catholick League, and who was murdered at *Blois*, was at the Door of *Coligny*'s Houſe, waiting for the Aſſaſſination; and cried aloud, *Beſme, is it done?* Immediately the Aſſaſſines threw the Body out of the Window. *Coligny* fell and expired at the Feet of *Guiſe*; the young Man trampled upon him, not that he was drunk with the furious Catholick Zeal of Perſecution, which at that time intoxicated half *France*, but he was prompted by the ſpirit of Revenge, which, tho' not generaly ſo unmerciful as the fury of Religion, yet leads often to more baſe Action.

Mean while all the Friends of *Coligny* are aſſaulted throughout *Paris*; Men, Women, and Children are promiſcuouſly ſlaughtered; every Street was ſtrown with expiring Bodies: ſome Prieſts holding up a Crucifix in one Hand, and a Sword in the other, ran at the Head of the Murderers, and encouraged them in

the

the Name of God, to ſpare neither Relations nor Friends.

Tavannes, Mareſhal of *France*, an ignorant and ſuperſtitious Soldier, who joined the fury of Religion to the rage of Party, rid a Horſeback through *Paris*, crying to his Soldiers, *Let Blood, let Blood, bleeding is wholeſome in the Month of* Auguſt *as will as in* May.

The King's Palace was one of the chief Theatres of Murder, for the Prince *Henry* of *Navarre* had his Lodgings in the *Louvre*, and all his Domeſticks were Proteſtants; many of them were killed in their Beds with their Wives; others were flying naked, and purſued by the Soldiers on the Stair Caſes; through all the Rooms of the Palace, nay even to the King's Antichamber, She young Wife of *Henry* of *Navarre* awakened by the dreadful Uproar, fearing for her Huſband, and for herſelf, ſtruck with Horror, and half dead, runs from her Bed in order to throw herſelf at the feet of the King her Brother; ſhe ſcarce had opened the door of her Chamber, when ſome of her Proteſtant Servants ruſht into it for refuge; the Soldiers enter after them; they purſue them in the ſight of the Princeſs, one who crept under her Bed was killed there; two others pierced with

with Halberds fell at her Feet, and ſhe was all covered with their Blood.

There was a young Nobleman, very much in the King's Favour for his Comely Air, his Honeſty, and a certain peculiar Happineſs in the Turn of his Converſation 'Twas the Earl of *la Rochefoucault*, Great-grandfather to the preſent *Marquiſs* of *Montendre*, who came over into *England* during another Perſecution, leſs cruel but not leſs unjuſt. *La Rochefoucault* had ſpent the Evening till Eleven a-Clock with the King in a pleaſant Familiarity, and had given a Looſe to the Sallies of his Imagination with the utmoſt Mirth and Alacrity.

The King felt a Remorſe, and was ſtruck with a ſtart of Compaſſion towards him; he bid him two or three Times not to go Home, but to lie in his Chamber. *La Rochefoucault* anſwered he would go to his Wife. The King preſſed him no further, and ſaid, *Let him go, I ſee God has decreed his Death.* The young Man was maſſacred two Hours after.

Few eſcaped in the general Slaughter; among theſe, the Deliverance of the young *la Force*, is a ſtrange Inſtance of what Men call *Deſtiny*. He was a Boy of ten Years old. His Father, his Elder Brother, and he were ſeized together by the Soldiers of the Duke *d' Anjou*. Theſe Mur-

Murderers fell upon all three promiſcuouſly, and ſtruck them at random, the Father and the Sons covred with Blood fell and lay upon one another. The Youngeſt received not one Blow, counterfeited to be dead, and made his eſcape the next Day; his Life ſo wonderfully preſerved laſted Fourſcore and Five years. He was the ſame famous Mareſhal *de la Force*, Uncle to the Dutcheſs of *la Force*, who is now in *England*.

Mean while many of thoſe miſerable Victimes fled to the River Side; ſome were ſwiming over to the *Fauxbourg S. Germain*. The King ſaw them from his Window, which look'd upon the River, and (what is almoſt incredible but too true) he fired upon them with a Carabine. *Catherine de Medicis*, undiſturbed and ſerene in the midſt of the Slaughter, look'd down from a Balcony ſituated towards the City, encouraged the Aſſaſſins, and laugh'd at the dying Groans of the Murdered; her Maids of Honour and ſome Ladies of the Court went down into the Street, and with an impudent Curioſity tallying with the Abominations of that Age, obſerved the naked Body of one *Soubiſe*, who had been ſuſpected of Impotency, and was juſt then killed under the Queen's Windows.

The Court reeking with the Blood of the Nation, try'd ſome Days after to palliate ſuch a Crime with Forms of Law. They juſtified the Maſſacres with a Calumny, they imputed to the Admiral, a Conſpiracy which no-body believed. The Parliament was ordered to proceed againſt the Memory of *Coligny*, his dead Body was hanged in Chains at the Gallows of *Montfaucon*. The King himſelf went to ſee that loathſome Spectacle, and as one of his Courtiers adviſed him to retire, and complain'd of the Stench of the Corps, the King anſwered, *A dead Enemy ſmells ſweet.*

That the Head of the Admiral was ſent afterwards to the Pope, is a Thing which cannot be proved. Certain it is that the Maſſacres of St. *Bartholomew*'s Day are painted at *Rome* in the Royal Hall of the *Vatican*, with theſe Words under the Picture, *Pontifex Colignii necem probat.*

Young *Henry* of *Navarre* was ſpared rather by the Policy than by the Pity of *Catherine*, who detained him a Priſoner, till the King's Death, in order to make him a Security and a Pledge for the Submiſſion of the Proteſtants who ſhould eſcape.

As to *Jeanne d' Albret*, ſhe died ſuddenly two or three Days before, and though

perhaps her Death was natural, 'twas not a raſh Opinion to believe her to have been poiſon'd.

However the Execution was not confin'd alone to the City of *Paris*, the ſame Orders were ſent from the Court to the Governors of all the Provinces of *France*; ſo that in a Week's time, more than a hundred thouſand Proteſtants were maſſacred all over the Kingdom.

Two or three Governors only refus'd to comply with the King's Orders; one among others, call'd *Montmorrin* Governor of *Auvergne* wrote to the King the following Letter, which deſerves to be tranſmitted to Poſterity;

Sir,

" I have received an Order under your " Majeſties Seal to put to Death all " the Proteſtants in my Province. I " have too much Reſpect for your Majeſ- " ty not to believe the Letter is counter- " feited; but, if (what God forbid) the " Order is truly yours, I have too much " Reſpect for your Majeſty to obey it.

Thoſe Maſſacres, wrought in the Proteſtants who eſcaped, Rage inſtead of Terror; their irreconciliable Hatred againſt the Court ſeem'd to ſupply them with new Vigour and the Spirit of Revenge increas'd their Strength.

Not

Not long after the King was taken with a ſtrange Sickneſs which carried him off in two Years. His Blood was daily ſtealing out, and guſhing through the Pores of his Skin, ſuch an unaccountable Diſtemper, which was ſo much above the Knowledge and the Skill of Phyſicians, was look'd upon as a Divine Vengeance, as if the Blood of a Prince could attone for the Blood of ſo many thouſand innocent Men.

During the Sickneſs of *Charles*, his Brother *Anjou* had been elected King of *Poland*, on account of the great Reputation which he had happily obtain'd when he was a General, and which he loſt, when a King.

As ſoon as he knew of his Brother's Death, he ſtole away from *Poland* and ran into *France* to enjoy the dangerous Inheritance of a Kingdom ſhattered by Factions, fatal to its Soveraigns, and ſtain'd with the Blood of its Inhabitants. He found at his Arrival nothing but Parties and Calamities, which he increas'd to the laſt Degree.

Henry, then King of *Navarre*, headed the Proteſtants, and gave new Life to their Party. On the other Side the young Duke of *Guiſe* began to dazzle the Eyes of the World with his great and dangerous Qualities, he had a Genius more enter-

prizing then his Father. He ſeem'd beſides to have a fair Opportunity of aiming at that Pitch of Grandeur to which his Father had opened the Way.

Anjou, now *Henry* the Third, was reputed unable to get Children, becauſe of the Infirmities, which the Debauches of his Youth had brought upon him. *Henry* of *Navarre* was the lawful Heir of the Crown. *Guiſe* try'd to ſecure it to himſelf, (at leaſt after the Death of *Henry* the Third) and to wreſt it from the Houſe of *Capets*, as formerly the *Capets* had uſurped it from the Deſcendants of *Charlemagne*, and as the Father of *Charlemagne* from his lawful Sovereign.

Never did ſo bold an Undertaking ſeem ſo well and ſo happily laid. *Henry* of *Navarre*, and all the Houſe of *Bourbon* were Proteſtants. *Guiſe* began to ingratiate himſelf with the Nation by the outward Shew of a Catholick Zeal. His Liberality ſecured to him the common People, he had all the Clergy at his Devotion, Fricnds in the Parliament, ſpies at Court, Servants throughout all the Kingdom. His firſt politick Step, was to make an Aſſociation, under the Name of the *Holy League*, againſt the Proteſtants for the Security of the Catholick Religion, half the Kingdom came with Eagerneſs into that new Project.

Pope

Pope *Sixtus Quintus* bleſſed the League, and ſupported it as a new *Romiſh* Militia. *Philip* the Second King of *Spain*, according to the Policy of all Sovereigns, who always help on the Ruin of their Neighbours, gave all Sorts of Encouragement to the League, in order to rent *France* to Pieces, and inrich himſelf with its Spoils.

Thus *Henry* being ſtill an Enemy to the Proteſtants, found himſelf betray'd by the Catholicks, ſurrounded by ſecret and open Foes, and over-power'd by a Subject, who, though ſubmiſſive in Appearance, was really more King than himſelf.

The only Way perhaps to emerge from theſe Difficulties, was to join with *Henry* of *Navarre*, whoſe Fidelity, Courage, and indefatigable Spirit, was the only Match for *Guiſe*, and who could ſecure to the King all the Proteſtant Party, which would have thrown much Weight into the Ballance.

The King, over-rul'd by *Guiſe*, (whom he diſtruſted, but durſt not provoke,) terrified by the Pope, betray'd by his Counſellors, and by his wrong Policy, took the contrary Way. He put himſelf at the Head of the *Holy League*, in Hopes to maſter it; he united with *Guiſe* his rebel Subject againſt his Succeſſor an his Brother-in-law,

whom Nature and true Policy pointed for his Ally.

Henry of *Navarre* was now in *Gaſcogne* at the head of a little Army, while a ſtrong body of Troops was coming to his Relief from the Proteſtant Princes of *Germany*, through the Borders of *Lorraine*.

The King imagined that he could at once reduce the *Navarrois*, and ſink *Guiſe*; in order to that he ſent the latter with a ſmall inconſiderable Army againſt the *Germans*, by whom he had like to have been overcome.

At the ſame Time he caus'd his Favourite *Joyeuſe* to march againſt the *Navarrois*, with the Flower of the *French* Nobility, and with one of the ſtrongeſt Armies that had appear'd in the Field ſince *Francis* the Firſt. He was diſappointed in all his Hopes, *Henry* of *Navarre* defeated intirely at *Coutras* his powerful Army, and *Guiſe* got the better of the *Germans*.

The only Uſe the *Navarrois* made of his Victory was to offer a ſure Peace to the Kingdom, and his Aſſiſtance to the King; but he was refus'd, tho' Conqueror, becauſe the King was ſtill more afraid of his Subjects than of him.

Guiſe return'd victorious to *Paris*, he was receiv'd like the Saviour of the Nation, his Party grew more audacious, the King more deſpis'd, in ſo much that

Guiſe

Guiſe ſeem'd to have triumph'd over him more than over the *Germans*.

The King preſs on every Side, awak'd from his Lethargy, but too late; he try'd to humble the League, he deſign'd to ſeize ſome of the moſt ſeditious Citizens, he had the Courage to forbid *Guiſe* to come to *Paris*; but he felt at his own Expenſe what it is to command without Power. *Guiſe* came to *Paris* in defiance of his Orders, the Citizens roſe up in Arms, the King's Guards were taken Priſoners, and himſelf inveſted in his Palace. Men are ſeldom good or bad enough. Had *Guiſe* attempted that Day againſt the Liberty or the Life of the King, he had been in all Likelyhood Maſter of *France:* but he let him eſcape after having beſieg'd him; and thus he did too much and too little.

Henry the Third fled to *Blois* where he held the general States of the Kingdom.

Theſe States reſemble the Parliament of *Great Britain* in their Convocation, but are very different from it in their Operations; as they are very ſeldom call'd, they have no Rules to guide them, they are generally made up of Men who never having been in any regular Meeting, know not how to behave themſelves, and 'tis rather a Confuſion than an Aſſembly.

Guiſe did not ſtick at going to *Blois* to defie his Sovereign before the Repreſentatives of the Nation, after having expelled him from his Capital.

Henry and he made a ſolemn Reconciliation. They went together to the ſame Altar, they receiv'd the Communion together, the one ſwore to forget all the paſt Injuries, the other to be for ever true and obedient: And at that very Time the King intended to put *Guiſe* to Death, and *Guiſe* to dethrone the King.

Guiſe was ſufficiently warn'd to beware of *Henry*, but he deſpis'd him ſo much as not to think him bold enough, even to attempt an Aſſaſſination. This Raſhneſs betray'd him. The King was reſolv'd to be revenged on him, and upon his Brother the Cardinal of *Guiſe*, the Partner of his ambitious Deſigns, and the moſt ardent Promoter of the League. He provided Daggers himſelf, and diſtributed them to ſome *Gaſcoons*, who offered to be the Miniſters of his Vengeance. They murdered *Guiſe* in the King's Cloſet; but theſe very Men who ponyarded him refuſed to embrue their Hands in the Blood of his Brother, becauſe he was a Prieſt and a Cardinal; as if the Life of one who wears a Band and a Caſſock were more ſacred, than that of one who wears a ſhort Veſt and a Sword.

The

The King met with four common Soldiers, who, as the Jeſuit *Maimbourg* ſays, having not ſo much Honour as the aforeſaid Gentlemen, killed the Cardinal for an Hundred Crowns a-piece.

The two Brothers were put to Death under *Catherine* of *Medici*'s Apartment; but ſhe was totally ignorant of her Son's Deſign, being at that Time diſtruſted by all Parties, and forſaken even by the King.

Had ſuch a Vengeance been perpetrated with the Formalities of the Law, which are the natural Inſtruments of the Juſtice of Kings, or the natural Veil to their Iniquity, it had terrified the League; but as it wanted that ſolemn Form, it was look'd upon as a villanous Murder, and did but exaſperate the Party. The Blood of the *Guiſes* invigorated the Strength of the League, as the Death of *Coligny* had given a new Life to the Proteſtants. Many Towns in *France* declared openly againſt the King, he went immediately to *Paris*; but he found the Gates ſhut againſt him, and all the City in Arms.

The famous Duke of *Mayenne*, younger Brother to the late Duke of *Guiſe*, was then in *Paris*. He was eclips'd by the Glory of *Guiſe* during his Life; but after his Death he prov'd as dangerous a

Foe

Foe as his Brother ; for all his Qualities were as great tho' not ſhining.

The Houſe of *Lorraine* was very numerous in *Paris*. The mighty Name of *Guiſe*, their Magnificence, their Liberality, their apparent Zeal for the Catholick Religion, had made them the Darlings of the City. Prieſts, Burgeſſes, Women, Magiſtrates, Soldiers, all united vigorouſly with *Mayenne* in the purſuit of a Vengeance that was thought very juſt.

The Duke's Widow preſented a Petition to the Parliament againſt *Henry* as a Murderer. The Tryal begun according to the common form of Law, two Counſellors were appointed to draw up the Articles of Impeachement againſt the King ; but the Parliament did not proceed further, the Heads of that Aſſembly being firmly attached to the Royal Cauſe.

The Doctors of *Sorbonne* were not ſo cautious, ſeventy of that Society iſſued forth a Writ, by which *Henry de Valois* was deprived of his Right to the Crown, and the Oaths of Allegiance were diſſolv'd.

But the moſt dangerous Ennemies to the Royal Authority, were ſome private Burgeſſes of *Paris*, called *the Sixteen*, not becauſe of their Number, for they were forty ; but from the Sixteen Wards of *Paris* which

which they had divided among themſelves to rule over. The moſt conſiderable of theſe Citizens, was one *le Clerc*, who had aſſumed the great Name of *Buſſi*. He was a bold Burgeſs and a bad Soldier like his Aſſociates. Theſe Sixteen had got an abſolute Power, and grew at laſt as inſupportable to the Duke of *Mayenne* himſelf, as terrible to the King.

Moreover, the Prieſts, who have ever been the Trumpeters of all the Revolutions in the World, thundered in the Pulpit, and aſſured in the Name of God, that whoſoever ſhould attempt to kill the Tyrant, ſhould go infallibly to Heaven. The ſacred and dangerous Names of *Ehud*, of *Judith*, and all the Aſſaſſinations which the Holy Scripture hath conſecrated, were then cryed out every where into the Ears of the Nation.

The King in ſuch an Extremity was forced at laſt to call to his Aid the ſame *Navarrois*, whoſe Help he had refuſed before. This Prince was better pleaſed to ſupport his Brother and his King than to have vanquiſh'd him.

He brought his Army over to the King, but before his Troops were arriv'd, he went forward to him, follow'd by a ſingle Page. The King was amazed at ſuch a piece of Generoſity, which he had himſelf been uncapable of.

How-

However the two Kings marched to *Paris*, at the Head of a powerful Army. The Town was not in a Condition to reſiſt. The League was upon the Brink of Ruin, when a young Friar, of the Order of *St. Dominic*, chang'd the whole Face of Affairs.

His Name was *James Clement*, born in a Village of *Burgundy*, call'd *Sorbonne*, and then four and twenty Years of Age. His ſurly Piety, and melancholly Mind, had been work'd up to *Enthuſiaſm* by the common Cry of the Prieſts: He took up, on him to be the Deliverer and the Martyr of the Holy League. He diſcovered his Deſign to his Friends, and to his Superiors, all encouraged him, and made a Saint of him beforehand. *Clement* prepar'd himſelf for his Undertaking, he faſted, ſpent whole Nights in Prayer, confeſs'd his Sins, receiv'd the Sacrament, bought a good Dagger, and went away to *St. Cloud*, where the King had his Quarters. He aſked for Admittance to the King under Pretence of revealing an important Secret, which could allow of no Delay. Being brought before his Majeſty, he kneeled down, and with a bluſhing Modeſty delivered into his Hands a Letter which he pretended was writ by the firſt Preſident *Achilles de Harlay*. As the King was peruſing the Letter, the Friar ſtabb'd him

in

in the Belly, and left the Dagger ſticking in the Wound, then with an unconcerned Look croſſed his Hands over his Breaſt, and lifted up his Eyes to Heaven, waiting for the Event without ſtirring.

The King cries out, riſes up, ſnatches the Dagger from his own Belly, and thruſts it into the Forehead of the Murderer.

Many Courtiers, ruſh in at the Noiſe, It had been their Duty to ſecure the Fryar, and reſerve him for Examination and Torture in order to a Diſcovery of his Accomplices. But they kill'd him on the Spot, with a Precipitation that laid them under the Suſpicion of having known too much of his Deſign.

Henry of *Navarre* was now King of *France* by his Birth-Right, Part of the Army acknowledged him, and Part forſook him.

Duke *d'Epernon* and ſome others retired, alledging they were too good Catholicks, to fight for a King who did not go to Maſs. They ſecretly hoped that a total Subverſion of the Kingdom (which they wiſh'd for, and relied on,) would give them an Opportunity of making themſelves Sovereigns in their reſpective Mannors.

Mean while the Deed of *Clement* was approved at *Rome*; and himſelf worſhipped in *Paris*. The holy League acknowledged for their King the Cardinal of *Bourbon* an old Prieſt, Uncle to *Henry* the Fourth in order to ſhow the World that it was the Hereticks and not the Houſe of *Bourbon*, with their Hatred purſued.

Thus the Duke of *Mayenne* was wiſe enough not to aſſume the Title of King, yet to get all the Royal Power in his Hands, while the miſerable Cardinal of *Bourbon*, whom the League call'd King, was kept Priſoner by *Henry* the Fourth during the remainder of his Life, which laſted but two Years.

The League more ſupported than ever by the Pope, aſſiſted by the *Spaniards*, and extreamly powerful by itſelf, was at the hight of her Grandeur, and look'd down upon *Henry* the Fourth with that Hatred which Religion inſpires, and with a Contempt begot by their Succeſſes.

Henry had few Friends, few great Towns, no Money, a ſmall Army; but his Courage, his Activity, his Policy ſupplied all thoſe Wants. He gained ſeveral Victories, eſpecially that of *Ivry* againſt *Mayenne*. This Battle was one of the moſt remarkable that ever was

fought

fought. The two Generals exerted on that Day all their Art, the Soldiers all their Courage, few Faults were committed on either Side. *Henry* ow'd at laſt the Victory to the Superiority of his Knowledge and Valour; but he confeſs'd that *Mayenne* had fulfill'd all the Duties of a great General. He *was*, ſaid the King, deficient only *in his Cauſe*.

He prov'd as clement in the Victory as he was terrible in the Battle. He knew beſides, that Power is often leſſened by the full uſe of it, and extended by Moderation. He ſtopp'd the Fury of the Soldiers who were purſuing the Ennemy, he took care of the wounded, ſet at Liberty many Priſoners. Yet ſo much Valour, and ſo much Generoſity did not mollify the Heart of the League.

The Civil Wars of *France* were now become the Quarrel of *Europe*. King *Philip* the Second was eagerly engaged in the defence of the League: Queen *Eliſabeth* gave all ſorts of Aſſiſtance to *Henry*, not becauſe he was a Proteſtant; but becauſe he was an Ennemy to *Philp* the Second, whoſe incroaching Power was dangerous to herſelf: She ſent him Five Thouſand Men under the command of the Earl of *Eſſex* her Favourite, the ſame whom ſhe cauſed afterwards to be beheaded.

The

The King continued the War with various Succeſs: In one Day he took by Storm all the Suburbs of *Paris*. He had taken the Town perhaps likewiſe, had he had no other View but to conquer. But he was afraid of giving up his Capital as a Prey to the Soldiery, and of deſtroying the City which he had a Mind to ſave. He beſieged *Paris*, he raiſed the Siege, he begun it again, at laſt he block'd it up, and cut off all the Communications to the Town, hoping that the Scarcity of Proviſions would force the *Pariſians* to ſurrender without Bloodſhed.

But *Mayenne*, the Prieſts, and *the Sixteen* Burgeſſes managed ſo dexterouſly the Spirits of the People, work'd up their Hatred againſt the Hereticks to ſuch a Degree, and fool'd their Imagination to ſuch an Enthuſiaſm, that they choſe rather to die by Hunger, than to ſubmit.

The Friars and the Monks made a Show, which, as ridiculous as it was in itſelf, was yet of great Uſe to animate the People. They made a Kind of military Muſter, marching in Rank and Files, wearing ruſty Armours over their Cowles, having at their Head the Figure of the Virgin *Mary*, weilding Swords in their Hands, and crying, *they*

were all ready to fight and to dye in the Defence of Faith. So that the Citizens who ſaw their Confeſſors in Arms, thought really that they fought the Cauſe of God.

However Scarcity occaſioned ſoon an univerſal Famine. That prodigious multitude of Citizens had no other Support but the Sermons of their Prieſts, and the fictitious Miracles of Fryars, who, by the way had all Things in Plenty in their Convents, while all the Town was reduced to ſtarve. The miſerable *Pariſiens* lull'd at firſt by the hopes of being ſoon reliev'd, were ſinging Ballads in the Streets, and Lampoons againſt *Henry*, a Fact not to be related with Probality of any other Nation; but ſuitable enough to the Genius of the *French* even in ſo deſolate a Condition. That ſhort-liv'd wretched Mirth was ſtopp'd quickly by the moſt ſerious and the moſt inexpreſſible Miſery. Thirty thouſand Men dyed of Hunger in a Month's Time. The poor ſtarv'd Citizens tryed to make a ſort of Bread with the Bones of the Dead, which being bruiſed and boil'd, were reduc'd to a kind of Gelly. But ſuch an unnatural Food afforded them no other manner of Benefit than to kill them the ſooner. It is recorded and confirmed by all the Teſtimonies which can be credible, that

a Woman kill'd and fed on her own Child. Morover the ſtubborn Obſtinacy of the *Pariſiens* was equal to their Calamities. *Henry* pityed their Condition more than they did themſelves; his good Nature prevail'd over his Intereſt.

He ſuffered his Soldiers to ſell privately all ſorts of Proviſions to the Town; thus it happened, what was never ſeen before, that the Beſiegers fed the Beſieged. 'Twas a ſingular Spectacle to ſee the Soldiers from the bottom of their Trenches ſend up Victuals to the Citizens, who were throwing down Money to them from the Ramparts. Many Officers prompted by the Licentiouſneſs common to a military life. bartered a Sirloin of Beef for a Wench, ſo that one might have ſeen Women getting down in Baſquets, and the Baſquets hoiſted up again full of Proviſions. By theſe Means the Officers were taken up with an unſeaſonable Licentiouſneſs, the Soldiers got too much Money, the Beſieged were reliev'd, and *Henry*, loſt the Town. For in the mean time an Army of *Spaniards* came from the low Countries; the King was obliged to raiſe the Siege, and run again through all the Toils and Viciſſitudes of War, till at laſt the *Spaniards* being driven out of the Kingdom, he came a third Time before

ſore *Paris*, that was ſtill more ſtrongly bent againgſt receiving him.

Now the Cardinal of *Bourbon* that Mock-King was dead: An Aſſembly was held in *Paris* under the Name of the General State of the Kingdom to proceed to the Election of a new King. *Spain* influenced powerfully thoſe States. *Mayenne* had a ſtrong Party, who would have plac'd the Crown on his Head. At laſt *Henry* tired with the cruel Neceſſity of waging an eternel War againſt his Subjects, knowing beſides they hated his Religion, not him, reſolved to turn *Roman Catholick*; for the Prieſts were the only Enemies he was afraid of. Few Weeks after *Paris* opened its Gates to him, and what his Valour and his Magnanimity could never bring about, was eaſily obtain'd by going to Maſs, and by receiving Abſolution from the Pope.

AN ESSAY ON EPICK POETRY.

WE have in every Art more Rules than Examples, for Men are more fond of teaching, than able to perform; ſo there are more Commentators than Poets, and many Writers who could not make two Verſes, have over-charg'd us with voluminous Treatiſes of Poetry. All thoſe Teachers ſeem to have much labour'd by their Definitions, Diſtinctions, &c. to ſpread a profound Obſcurity over Things in their own Nature clear and perſpicuous; and 'tis no wonder if ſuch Lawgivers, unequal to the Burthen which they took upon themſelves, have embroil'd the States which they intended to regulate.

The greateſt Part of the Criticks have fetch'd the Rules of *Epick* Poetry from the Books of *Homer*, according to the Cuſtom, or rather, to the Weakneſs of Men, who miſtake commonly the Beginning of an Art, for the Principles of the Art itſelf, and are apt to believe, that every Thing muſt be by its own Nature, what it was, when contriv'd at firſt. But as *Homer* wrote two Poems of a quite different Nature, and as the *Eneid* of *Virgil* partakes of the *Iliad*, and of the *Odiſſey*, the Commentators were forc'd to eſtabliſh different Rules to reconcile *Homer* with himſelf, and other new Rules again to make *Virgil* agree with *Homer*: Juſt as the Aſtronomers labour'd under the Neceſſity of adding to, or taking from their Syſtems, and of bringing in concentric, and excentric Circles, as they diſcover'd new Motions in the Heavens.

The Ignorance of the Aſtronomers was excuſable, and their Search after the unfathomable Syſtem of Nature, was to be commended; becauſe it is certain, that Nature hath its own Principles unvariable, unerring, and as worthy of our Search, as remote from our Conceptions.

But it is not with the Inventions of Art, as with the Works of Nature. The ſame Fancy which hath invented Poetry,

try, changes every Day all its Productions, becauſe it is liable itſelf to eternal Viciſſitudes. The Poetry and Muſick of the *Perſians*, differ as much from ours, as their Language. Even a Nation differs from itſelf, in leſs than a Century. There are not more Revolutions in Governments, than in Arts. They are ſhifting, and gliding away from our Purſuit, when we endeavour to fix them by our Rules and Definitions.

If I am to give a Definition of a Suit of Cloaths, I ought not to deſcribe any particular one. Neither the *Roman* nor the *Greek*, nor the *French* ought to be ſet up for a Pattern. A Suit of Cloaths in itſelf, is the covering of the Body, that is all that is eſſential to it. The reſt is but acceſſary Ornament, which Fancy and Cuſtom create, preſerve, and deſtroy at their Will; and if we like one Faſhion beſt, we are not to exclude every other.

So 'tis perhaps with *Epick* Poetry. The Word *Epick* comes from *Epos*, which ſignifies Diſcourſe. An *Epick* Poem is a Diſcourſe in Verſe. Uſe alone has prefix'd the Name of *Epick*. particularly to thoſe Poems which relate ſome great Action. Let the Action be ſingle or complex, let it lie in one ſingle Place, as in

the *Iliad*, or let the Hero wander all the World over, as in the *Odiſſey*; let there be one ſingle Hero, or a great many; happy, or unfortunate; furious as *Achilles*, or pious as *Æneas*; let them be Kings, or Generals, or neither of them; let the Scene lie upon the *Indian Ocean*, as in the *Luſiada* of *Camouens*; in the *Weſt-Indies*, as in the *Araucana* of *Alonzo* of *Ercilla*; in Hell, in Heaven, out of the Limits of our Nature, as in *Milton*; the Poem will equally deſerve the Name of *Epick*, unleſs you have a Mind to honour it with another Title proportionable to its Merit.

In ſo boundleſs a Career, the Point of the Queſtion, and of the Difficulty, is to know what all polite Nations agree upon, and in what they differ.

An *Epick* Poem ought to be grounded upon Judgment, and embelliſh'd by Imagination; what belongs to good Senſe, belongs to all the Nations of the World. The *Greeks*, the *Romans*, the *Italians*, *French*, *Engliſh* and *Spaniards*, tell us in all their Works, that they chiefly like *Unity of Action*, becauſe the Underſtanding is better ſatisfy'd when it repoſes upon a ſingle Object, adequate to our View, and which we may take in eaſily, than when it is loſt in the Hurry of Confuſion.

They

They tell us, that ſuch an *Unity* ought to be attended with Variety, as a Body is made up of Members, all different, and all conducive to the ſame End; That the Action ſhould be *great*, to ſtrike us with Awe, *intereſting*, becauſe we delight in being mov'd, *entire*, that our Minds may be wholly ſatisfy'd.

Theſe, and the like, are a Kind of eternal Laws, ſubmitted to by all Nations, becauſe enacted by Nature. But the *Machinery*, the *Epiſodes*, the Stile itſelf, and all that depends upon that inſtinct call'd *Taſte*, and upon the Tyranny of Cuſtom, that is the Point in which there are too many Opinions and no Rules.

It is true, there are Beauties which the Taſte of every Nation equally reliſh. Since all *Europe* hath ſet up the *Greek*, and *Roman* Authors for Models of Writing, *Homer* and *Demoſthenes*, *Virgil* and *Tully*, have in ſome Meaſure united under their Laws our *European* Nations, and made of ſo many and different Countries, a ſingle Commonwealth of Letters. But ſtill our particular Cuſtoms have introduc'd among them all, a new Sort of Taſte, peculiar to each Nation.

The beſt modern Writers have mix'd the Taſte of their Country, with that of the Anciens. Their Flowers, and their Fruits,

Fruits, warm'd and matur'd by the ſame Sun, yet draw from the Soil they grow upon, their different Colours, their Flavours and their Size. It is as eaſy to diſtinguiſh a *Spaniſh*, an *Italian*, or an *Engliſh* Author, by their Stile, as to know by their Gate, their Speech, and their Features, in what Country they were born.

The *Italian* Softneſs, their Witticiſm, ſo often degenerating into Conceit, the pompous and metaphorical Stile of the *Spaniard*, the Exactneſs and Perſpicuity of the *French*, the Strength peculiar to the *Engliſh*, their Fondneſs of Allegories, their running into Similes, are ſo many diſtinguiſhable Marks, which do not eſcape the Obſervation of proper Judges,

From their different Characters flows that diſlike that every Nation ſhows for the Taſte of its Neighbour. Hence it is that the Battle of the Angels in *Milton*, would not ſucceed among the *French*. Hence it is that the long, but noble Speeches of *Cinna*, and *Auguſtus*, in *Corneille*. could not be tolerated upon the *Engliſh* Stage.

Theſe following Lines of *Taſſo*, are admired in *Italy*, learnt by Heart, and in every Body's Mouth.

Colei Sophronia, *Olindo egli S'apella,*
D'una cittade entrambi, e d'una ſede.
Ei che modeſto è ſi com' eſſa e bella,
Brama aſſai, poco Spera, e nulla chiede,
Ne ſa Scoprirſi, o non ardiſce; e ella,
O lo Sprezza, o no'l vede, o non s'avede;
Coſi fin hora il miſero ha ſervito,
O non viſto, o mal noto, o mal gradito.

There is nothing in theſe Lines, that offends againſt good Senſe; but ſuch a gingling of Words, that overnice Symmetry of Expreſſion, that curl'd Thought revolving on itſelf, won't methinks be applauded by a *French*, or an *Engliſh* Reader, who require a more ſerious and more majeſtick Simplicity in *Heroic* Poetry.

Among many Paſſages of *Milton*, which every *French* Reader would ſtartle at, I beg leave to quote one, which has here more Partiſans than Criticks; 'tis in the firſt *Canto*.

At once as far as Angels Ken, he views
The diſmal Situation, waſte and wild,

A Dungeon horrible, on all Sides round,
As one great Fournace flam'd; yet from thoſe [Flames
No Light, but rather a Darkneſs viſible,
Serv'd only to diſcover Sights of Woe.

Antonio de Solis, in his excellent Hiſtory of *Mexico*, hath ventur'd on the ſame Thought, when ſpeaking of the Place wherein *Montezuma* was wont to conſult his Deities; "'Twas a large dark ſubterraneous Vault, ſays he, where ſome diſmal Tapers afforded juſt Light enough to ſee the Obſcurity."

Such daring Thoughts would be look'd upon as Nonſenſe, by a *French* Critick, whoſe Exactneſs is often call'd in *England* Timidity. And ſince the greateſt Poets among the *Engliſh*, and the beſt Writers among the *Spaniards*, have not ſcrupl'd to indulge now and then ſuch Flights bordering on Bombaſt, that proves at leaſt, that in their Countries, the Authors have a more free Scope than in *France*.

I need no more Examples to demonſtrate, that there is ſuch a Thing as a National Taſte.

This once granted, if we have a Mind to get a true Knowledge of *Epick* Poetry, it would be worth our while to take a Survey of all the different Poems of that Kind,

Kind, which have ſucceeded in different Ages, and in different Countries.

'Tis not enough to be acquainted with *Virgil*, and *Homer*. As in regard to Tragedy, a Man who has only perus'd *Sophocles* and *Euripides*, could not have an entire Notion of the Stage. We ſhould be their Admirers, not their Slaves. We do not ſpeak the ſame Language. Our Religion (the great Baſis of *Epick* Poetry) is the very Reverſe of their Mythology: Our Battles, our Sieges, our Fleets, are more different from theirs, than our Manners from thoſe of *America*. The Invention of Gun-Powder, that of the Compaſs, that of Printing, ſo many Arts beſides newly emerg'd into the World, have alter'd the Face of the Univerſe; and an *Epick* Poet, being ſurrounded with ſo many Novelties, muſt have but a ſmall Share of Genius, if he durſt not be new himſelf.

We ſend our Children to travel into neighbouring Countries, after they have read *Virgil* and *Homer* at School. Should their Time be ill employ'd in getting a thorough Knowledge of *Milton* in *England*, or of *Taſſo* in *Italy*? Where are Monuments to be found, which better deſerve the Obſervation of a Traveller?

Our juſt Reſpect for the Ancients, proves a meer Superſtition, if it betrays us into a raſh Contempt of our Neighbours and Countrymen. We ought not to do ſuch an Injury to Nature, as to ſhut our Eyes to all the Beauties that her Hands pour around us, in order to look back fixedly on her former Productions.

'Tis a Pleaſure, no doubt, and a great Improvement of our Mind, to ſurvey all the *Epick* Writers in their reſpective Countries, from *Homer* down to *Milton* and to obſerve the different Features, and the various Dreſſes of thoſe great Men.

'Tis a Task beyond the Reach of my Capacity, to give a full Proſpect of them. I ſhall but faintly touch the firſt Lines of their Pictures. Some abler Hand will add the finiſhing Strokes to this imperfect Drawing.

The judicious Reader will ſupply the Defects, and inforce the feeble Hints he will find in this Eſſay. My Part is to propoſe, his to judge; and his Judgment will be right, if he attends without Partiality, laying aſide the Prejudices of the School, or the over-bearing Love of the Productions of his own Country.

He will mark the Progreſſes, the Sinking of the Art, its riſing again, and purſue it through its various Changes.

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He will diſtinguiſh the Beauties, and the Faults which are ſuch, every where, and in all Ages, from thoſe doubtful Things which are call'd Blemiſhes by one Nation, and ſtil'd Perfections by another.

He will not be tyranniz'd by *Ariſtotle*, *Caſtelvetro*, *Dacier*, *Le Boſſu*; but he will extract his own Rules from the various Examples he ſhall have before his Eyes, and govern'd by his good Senſe alone, be a Judge between the Gods of *Homer*, and the God of *Milton*, and between *Calipſo*, *Dido*, *Armida*, and *Eve*.

But if the Reader be ſo juſt, as to make Allowances for the Time, in which thoſe different Authors have writ, it is to be hoped, he will look with ſome Indulgence on the Diction of this Eſſay. and pardon the Failings of one who has learn'd *Engliſh* but this Year, of one who has drawn moſt of his Obſervations from Books written in *England*, and who pays to this Country but Part of what he owes to her. A Nurſe is not diſpleaſed with the ſtammering Articulations of a Child, who delivers to her with much ado his firſt undigeſted Thoughts.

HOMER.

IT would ſeem too aſſuming, and prove very uſeleſs, to expatiate upon *Homer* and *Virgil*, eſpecially in *England*, where there is ſcarce a Gentleman unacquainted with *Latin* and *Greek*.

As to *Homer*, thoſe who cannot read him in the Original, have Mr. *Pope*'s Tranſlation, they may diſcern the Fire of that Father of Poetry, reflected from ſuch a poliſh'd and faithful Glaſs. I will neither point out his Beauties, ſince none of them are loſt in the Tranſlation, nor cavil at his Faults, which are for the moſt Part leſſen'd or embelliſh'd.

Let every Reader conſult himſelf, when he reads *Homer*, and reflect how that Poem works upon his Mind; then he will judge if *Homer* hath reach'd to the utmoſt Pitch of the Art, in any Thing elſe but in that predominant Force of *Painting* which makes his peculiar Character.

Notwithſtanding the Veneration due, and paid to *Homer*, it is very ſtrange, yet true, that among the moſt learn'd, and the greateſt Admirers of Antiquity, there is ſcarce one to be found, who ever read the *Iliad*, with that Eagerneſs and Rapture, which a Woman feels when ſhe reads the Novel

of

of *Zaïda*; and as to the common Maſs of Readers, leſs converſant with Letters, but not perhaps endow'd with a leſs Share of Judgment and Wit, few have been able to go through the whole *Iliad*, without ſtrugling againſt a ſecret Diſlike, and ſome have thrown it aſide after the fourth or the fifth Book. How does it come to paſs, that *Homer* hath ſo many Admirers, and ſo few Readers? And is at the ſame Time worſhipp'd and neglected?

I'll endeavour to give ſome Reaſons for this Paradox. The common Part of Mankind is aw'd with the Fame of *Homer*, rather than ſtruck with his Beauties. The judicious Reader is pleas'd no doubt with the noble Imagination of that great Author, but very few have command enough over their own Prejudices, and can tranſport themſelves far enough into ſuch a remote Antiquity, as to become the Contemporaries of *Homer* when they read him: Good Senſe bids them to make Allowances of the Manners of his Time, but 'tis almoſt impoſſible to bring themſelves to a quick Reliſh of them. The Rays of his Light tranſmitted to their Eyes through ſo long a Way, afford them but a feeble glimmering Twilight, and no Warmth. They are like the old Counſellors of

Priam, who confeſs'd without any Emotion of Heart, that *Helena* was a Beauty.

A ſecond Reaſon of their Diſlike, is that Uniformity which ſeems diffuſed through all the Work. The Battles take up three Parts of the whole *Iliad*. The Reader is more likely to be diſguſted by the continual Glare of that predominant Colour which is ſpread over the Poem, than to be pleaſed with the Variety of Teints, and Shades, which require a refin'd Sight to perceive them.

Thirdly, the Poem is certainly too long, and an 'tis Exception, that all the *Epick* Poets are liable to; for there is no *Epick* Poetry without a powerful Imagination, and no great Imagination without over-flowing.

I wave here all the Quarrels rais'd by the Enemies of *Homer*, to ſuch Parts of his Poems, as may be the Objects of our Criticiſm, but never the Cauſe of our Sleep.

His Gods are perhaps at once abſurd and entertaining, as the Madneſs of *Arioſto* amuſes us with a bewitching Delight. And for his other Faults, the Majeſty, and the Fire of his Stile, brightens them often into Beauties.

But in my Opinion, the beſt Reaſon for that languour which creeps upon the Mind of ſo many Readers in Spight of the

the Flaſhes which rouſe her now and then, is, that *Homer* intereſſes us for none of his Heroes. *Achilles* is too boiſterous to inſpire us with a tender Concern for him. And ſuppoſe his very Fierceneſs could extort, from us that favourable Diſpoſition which the overpowering Idea of Valour generally forces us into, his long Idleneſs wears away the Throught of him, and as the Poet lays him aſide, ſo does the Reader.

Menelaus, who is the only Occaſion of the War, and in whom of Courſe our Affections ought to center, is very far from being a ſhining Character. *Paris*, his Rival, excites our Contempt. *Menelaus* is in the Poem, but the Brother of *Agamemnon*, and *Paris*, the Brother of *Hector*. *Agamemnon*, King of Kings, ſhocks us with his Pride, without giving us any great Idea of his Conduct. I do not know how it comes to paſs, but every Reader bears ſecretly an ill Will to the wiſe *Ulyſſes*. The fair *Helena*, the Cauſe of ſo great Miſchiefs, is inſignificant enough. No-body cares whoſe Share ſhe will fall to, ſince ſhe ſeems herſelf indifferent between her two Huſbands.

When two Warriors fight in the *Iliad*, we are aw'd indeed with the Deſcription, nay often tranſported with their

Fury, but we feel neither Hope nor Fear for any of them.

We are like *Juno* in the *Æneid*,

Tros rutulus ve fuat, nullo diſcrimine habebo.

We pity indeed the Misfortunes of *Priam*, nor will I quarrel with the Tears that we give to his Afflictions. I wiſh only that *Homer* would have intereſted us for the *Greeks*, throughout all the Poem, ſince he intends to praiſe them, and ſince they are the Heroes of the Poem; but I'll go no further than to obſerve, that if we are mov'd with the Sorrow of *Priam*, at the very End of the Poem, we are indifferent towards him in the Courſe of the Action.

Of all the Warriors, the couragious, the tender, and the pious *Hector*, deſerves moſt our Affections. He hath the beſt Character, though he defends the wrong Cauſe; and he is betray'd by the Gods, though he hath ſo much Virtue.

But our Concern for him is loſt, in the Crowd of ſo many Heroes. Our Attention is divided, and leſſen'd, like a Stream cut into many Rivulets.

Thus the Reader's Imagination is often fill'd with great and noble Ideas, while the Affections of the Soul ſtagnate;

nate; and if in any long Work whatever, the Motions of the Heart do not keep Pace with the Pleaſures of the Fancy, 'tis no Wonder if we may at once admire and be tir'd.

If all theſe Reaſons are conteſted (for what Aſſertion of our Minds is undiſputable?) I muſt add a further Obſervation, which is a Matter of Fact out of the Reach of Diſpute. Many of the Books of the *Iliad* are independent from one another; they might be tranſpos'd without any great Alteration in the Action: And perhaps, for that Reaſon, they were call'd Rapſodies. I leave to the Judgment of the Reader, if ſuch a Work, let it be never ſo well written, never ſo teeming with Beauties (can be intereſting) and win our Attention.

VIRGIL.

MR. *Addiſon* was the firſt who conſidered in their proper View the Materials which compos'd the Structure of the *Æneid*.

It is certain *Virgil* fram'd his Poem out of many Fables concerning the Settlement of *Æneas* in *Italy*, handed down to his Time, which were credited by the People, with a Kind of ſuperſtitious Belief.

In the like Manner, it is probable, *Homer* founded his *Iliad*, upon the Tradition of the *Trojan* War.

For to believe *Homer* and *Virgil* ſubmitted before-hand, to the Rules laid down by *Le Boſſu*, who bids an *Epick* Poet invent, and diſpoſe the Conſtitution of his Fable, before he thinks of the Name of his Heroes, is not indeed natural: In all likelihood they did not cut the Coat without knowing whoſe ſhape it could fit. Such a Rule may be obſerv'd in Comedy, which deals chiefly in the Expoſition of the Manners, and of the Ridicule of the Age; or Delights in a Plot, made up of ſurpriſing, but little Incidents, which never require the Teſtimony of Hiſtory, or the Weight of any celebrated Name.

But the *Epick*, as well as the *Tragick* Poets, generally pitch upon a Subject, and a Hero well known, whoſe ſingle Name muſt ſtrike the Reader with Awe, and command his Attention. They adapt their Invention to the Hiſtory, for if one ſhould begin by laying down a Fable intirely of his own Imagination, all the Records in the Univerſe could not afford him an Event, adequate to his Plan; he muſt needs alter it. And I cannot apprehend why Mr. *Le Boſſu*,

adviſes

adviſes to build what muſt neceſſarily be deſtroy'd.

Whatever it be, Part of the Events included in the *Æneid*, are to be found in *Dionyſius Halicarnaſſus*. He mentions with Accuracy, the Courſe of the Navigation of *Æneas*. He does not omit the Fable of the *Harpies*, the Predictions uttered by *Celæno*, the eating up of the Cakes, *&c.*

As to the Metamorphoſe of the Ships in Nymphs, if *Dionyſius* does not mention it, *Virgil* himſelf takes care to juſtify ſuch an Abſurdity, by telling us, that it was an ancient Tradition;

Priſca fides facto, ſed fama perennis.

It ſeems that *Virgil* aſham'd of ſuch a fairy Tale, hath a Mind to excuſe it by the common Belief.

Many Paſſages of *Virgil* conſidered in this View, are intirely vindicated againſt his Criticks, whoſe good Senſe was miſled in the Particular by their Inattention.

If an Author among the *French*, attempts a Poem on *Clovis*, he is allow'd to ſpeak of the Holy Vial, brought down from Heaven, in the Bill of a Dove, into the Church of *Rheims*, for the Coronation of the King. If an *Engliſh* Wri-

ter takes King *Arthur* for his Subject, he may without Cenſure bring in the Incantations of *Merlin*, it being the Fate of all thoſe antient Fables, which the Beginning of every Nation is involv'd in, to be rever'd for their Antiquity, when they are laugh'd at for their Abſurdity; but upon the Whole, it would be better to omit them, though we are allow'd to mention them; for a ſingle Reader of Senſe, who will be ſhock'd at ſuch Stories, deſerves more Reſpect, than the Crowd which gives them Credit.

As to the Conſtruction of his Fable, he is accus'd by ſome, and commended by others, for having follow'd *Homer* cloſely; but if I dare ſpeak my Opinion, he deſerves neither ſuch an Injury, nor ſuch a Compliment. He could not avoid introducing the Gods of *Homer*, who were the *Roman* Gods too, nor talking of the Siege of *Troy*, ſince *Æneas* was a *Trojan* Hero.

Thoſe Things were common to the *Greek* Author, and to him. He draws his Richeſſes from the ſame Source, but not at the Expence of his Predeceſſor.

Virgil, 'tis true, hath tranſlated ſome Paſſages of the *Iliad*, and of the *Odiſſey*; he hath borrow'd ſome little Deſcriptions, ſome obvious Similes, which ſurely

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ly his great Genius did not want, by which but a little Glory could acrue to him, and which are rather an Honour paid by him to *Homer*, than a Proof of his ſtanding in Need of Help.

'Tis pleaſant to ſee how ſome Criticks have triumph'd, in the Diſcovery of thoſe Trifles. Thoſe who take up Arms for *Homer*, againſt *Virgil*, and who ſacrifice the Pleaſure of being pleas'd with both, to the chimerical Fancy of raiſing the Glory of the one, at the Expence of the other, pretend that *Dido* is the Copy of *Calipſo*. That *Æneas* is ſent to the Shades after *Ulyſſes*, and the like. Let the Readers compare thoſe pretended Copies with the ſuppos'd Original, they will find a wonderful Difference.

The Paſſion of *Dido*, her Misfortune, her Death, brought in as the Cauſe of that everlaſting Hatred between *Carthage* and *Rome*; and *Anchiſes* calling forth from the Womb of Time, the Fate of the *Roman* Empire, all theſe Beauties are not certainly owing to *Homer*.

It is not in the Nature of a Genius, to be a Copiſt. Wherever *Virgil* is great, he is himſelf; but in thoſe little Paſſages borrow'd from *Homer*, he commonly falls ſhort of the Original; and 'tis a juſt Puniſhment for having clogg'd the

Liberty

Liberty of his Genius, with the Fetters of Imitation.

Some Critlcks proceed further, they tell us, *Virgil* has copied his ſecond Book from *Piſander*, and the fourth after *Apollonius*.

If he has ſtolen from them, then he hath not robb'd *Homer*. But all that ought to be flatly deny'd; and the only Anſwer which is to be made to ſuch Diſcoveries, is, that the ſecond and fourth Book of *Virgil*, are too great Maſter-Pieces of Art to be but Copies.

'Tis juſt as ſome People ſay *Milton* hath ſtolen his Poem from an *Italian* Stroller call'd *Andreino*.

And after all, what avails ſuch a trifling Enquiry? 'Tis not the Perſon of *Virgil*, 'tis the *Æneid*, which we admire; let the ſecond and the fourth Book belong to *Piſander*, to *Apollonius*, or to *Virgil*, or to any-body elſe, the Name of the Author does not alter the Beauties of the Book. Let *Macrobius* and other Criticks, detract from the ſix Letters which make up the Name of *Virgil*, his Works will nevertheleſs be the Delight of all Ages and the Pattern of all Poets.

Another Objection againſt him, is, that he hath not crowded in his Poems ſo many Heroes as *Homer* hath done. That *Aiax*, *Diomedes*, *Idomeneus*, &c. are

are all ſhining Characters; whereas the faithful *Achates*, the ſtrong *Gias*, and the magnanimous *Cloanthus*, are of no Manner of Uſe, and ſerve only but to fill now and then the Gap of a Verſe or two.

I am apt to think, that ſuch an Objection turns a great deal to the Advantage of the *Æneid*. *Virgil* ſung the Actions of *Æneas*, and *Homer* the Idleneſs of *Achilles*.

The *Greek* Poet lay under the Neceſſity of ſupplying the Abſence of his firſt *Hero*, with ſome other Warrior; but what was judicious in *Homer*, would have been prepoſterous in *Virgil*: He knew too much of his Art, to drown his principal Character in the Crowd of many other Heroes, indifferent to the main Action.

Thus he found the Way to center our Concern in *Æneas*; he intereſſes us for him, by never loſing Sight of him, while *Homer* preſenting us with the ſhifting Scene of ſo many ſhining Characters, intereſſes us for none.

Mr. *De St. Evremont* ſays, *Æneas* is fitter to be the Founder of an Order of Monks, than of an Empire. 'Tis true, *Æneas* hath the Misfortune to paſs generally under the Notion of a pious Man, and not a great Warrior; the

Fault

Fault is not in *Virgil*, it lies in the wrong Notions which the Generality of Mankind entertains of Courage. Our Eyes are dazzl'd with the boiſterous Fury of a wild Hero. Had *Virgil* been leſs wiſe, had the Courage of *Æneas* been a barbarous Raſhneſs, inſtead of a ſedate, and calmly-daring Valour, perhaps he might pleaſe better, but ſurely he would deſerve it leſs.

It is a juſt Criticiſm on *Virgil*, that the latter part of his Poem is leſs animated than the firſt, not that the ſix laſt Books are intirely languiſhing, but their milder Light is overpowered by the Luſtre of the others.

That great Defect is owing to the Diſpoſition of the Poem, and to the Nature of the Things. The Deſign of a Match between *Æneas* and *Lavinia* unknown and indifferent to each other, and a War rais'd about a Stag wounded by a young Boy, could not indeed command our Concern as well as the burning of *Troy*, and the Love of *Dido*.

'Tis a great Miſtake to believe an Author can ſoar, when the Subject ſinks. All the Art he employs, ſhows only that he till'd with Labour and Skill an ungrateful Soil. If the natural Chain of Events in the *Æneid* could have allow'd *Virgil* to riſe by Degrees in point of Sentiments

timents and Grandeur; his Poem had been as unexceptionable as the Bounds of human Talent will permit. In ſhort his Fault lies in having reach'd to the utmoſt pitch of the Art in the middle of his Courſe.

LUCAN.

After we have lifted up our Eyes towards *Virgil*, and *Homer*, we need not look down on the other *Roman* Authors who have been ſtumbling in the ſame Carrier. Let us lay aſide their mean and monſtrous Mimicks, *Statius*, and *Silius Italicus*; but we ought not to overlook *Lucan*, who took entirely a new Courſe, and whoſe free Genius borrow'd neither its Beauties nor its Faults.

He was of an ancient equeſtrian Family, born at *Cordova* in *Spain* under *Caligula*; he was brought to *Rome* when Eight Month's old, and educated there, under the Influence of his Uncle *Seneca*, with the nice Care that his Birth, his opulent Fortune, and eſpecially the Pregnaney of his early *Genius* deſerved. I mention this, only to ſilence, thoſe Criticks who have call'd in queſtion the Purity of his Language; they took him for a *Spaniard*, who wrote *Roman* Verſes; and prepoſſeſs'd with that Notion, they fancied they diſcover'd in his Language

ſome

ſome Faults which do not really exiſt; and which if they did exiſt, could not be perceiv'd by any Modern.

He was at firſt a Favourite to *Nero*, till he had the noble Imprudence to contend with him for the prize of Poetry, and the dangerous Honour of carrying it.

He praiſed that Emperor in his *Pharſalia*, while *Nero* was yet the Delight of the Empire; he conſpir'd againſt him when the Emperor become a Tyrant. All the World knows he was ſentenced to die; and the Choice of the manner of his Death being left to him, he choſe to have the Veins of his Arms and Legs open'd in a hot Bath; and dy'd with that Tranquillity, which in thoſe Moments is the true greatneſs of Soul.

He was not the firſt who thought a recent Hiſtory the proper ſubject of an *Epick* Poem, for *Varius* had ventur'd beſore him (and with Succeſs) on ſuch a dangerous Undertaking.

The Proximity of the Times and the Notoriety of the Events which he took for his Theme, were certainly a great Clog to his Poetical Invention, (if he had any.)

The greater his Subject was, the greater the Difficulty. *Ceſar* and *Pompey* were no doubt Men of higher Importance

tance than *Agamemnon*, or *Æneas*; and the War wag'd before the Walls of *Troy* and before *Latium*, were but Frays of Children in compariſon of the *Roman* Civil War in which the greateſt Men of *Rome* fought for the Empire of the World.

Lucan could hardly give any Scope to his Imagination on a Subject ſo well known, and with more Difficulty come up to its Grandeur. On theſe Accounts the frame of his Poem is dry and tedious, becauſe he dares not deviate from the Hiſtory; and his Stile ſwells too often in to *Fuſtian*, when he endeavours to raiſe it to the Actions of his Heroes.

So *Æneas* and *Achilles* who were inconſiderable in themſelves, are for ever great in *Homer* and *Virgil*. While *Cæſar* and *Pompey*, ſink under the Bombaſt of *Lucan*. 'Tis a great Pity that the Pictures of his Heroes being drawn with ſuch maſterly Strokes, their Actions are ſo little affecting.

Nothing is more beautiful than the Character of *Cato*, of *Ceſar*, and of *Pompey*, but nothing more languiſhing than the part which they act. *Lucan* with all the force of his Painting, with his Grandeur, with his Wit, with his political Notions is but a declamatory Gazeteer:

teer: Sublime here and there, faulty through all the Work.

He is to be commended for having laid the Gods aſide, as much as *Homer* and *Virgil* for having made uſe of that Machinery. Thoſe Fables were adapted to the dark fabulous Ages in which *Priam* and *Latinus* liv'd, but no Way ſuitable to the Wars of *Rome*. What brightens the Character of *Æneas*, and confers a Majeſty on the inconſiderable Beginnings of *Rome*, would have de bas'd the Character of *Ceſar*, and draw a Ridicule upon him. What a poor Figure would that Conqueror make in the Field of *Pharſalia*, ſhould he be aſſiſted by *Iris* or by *Mercury?*

Methinks that ſhows evidently that the Intervention of the Gods is not abſolutely requir'd in an *Epick* Poem. They are ſo far from being neceſſary, that the beſt Paſſage of *Lucan* (and perhaps of all the Poets) is the Speech of *Cato* in the Ninth Book, when he ſcorns to conſult *Jupiter*. 'Tis not for want of Gods, but for want of managing with Art the Affairs of Men, that *Lucan* is inferior to *Virgil*.

The Judgment of the World is juſtly paſſed upon him. He is look'd upon as a ſtrong Genius, tho' not as a good Poet; and the precious Stones which ſhine in the

Phar-

Pharſalia, (tho' ill ſet,) yet dazzle and ſhine in our Eyes. Monſieur *de Corneille* was us'd to ſay, that he was more indebted to *Lucan* than to *Virgil*. Not that he was ſo unjuſt, and of ſo injudicious a Taſte as to prefer the *Pharſalia* to the *Æneid*. But an Author who brings real Heroes upon the Stage, has but little to do with Poetical Fictions, and will be better help'd by the vigorous Thoughts of *Lucan*, than by the elegant Narration of *Virgil*. Mr. *Adiſſon* borrowed from the *Pharſalia* ſome Strokes, in the drawing of his *Cato*. That Ancient Poet never received a greater Honour then when he was imitated by Mr. *de Corneille* and by Mr. *Adiſſon*, two Men every way ſuperior to him.

TRISSINO.

After the Fall of the *Roman* Empire in the *Weſt*; ſeveral Kingdoms roſe out of its Ruins, and many Languages were form'd out of the remains of the *Latin* Tongue. The *Northern* Invaders brought every where their Roughneſs and their Ignorance. Their Language made up at firſt of a corrupted *Latin*, and of irregular *Gotick*, was as uncouth as their Manners, and as deſtitute of Words as their Minds of *Ideas*.

In the Courſe of a thouſand Years the *Italians*, the *French*, the *Spaniards*, refin'd their Manners and their Idioms. And learning ſpreading itſelf by Degrees almoſt over all *Europe*, enlarg'd the Sphere of every Language.

Many Writers complain now-a-days, that the *Latin* is us'd only in the Schools, and in the *Romiſh* Churches; they upbraid the Inſufficiency of modern Languages; they ſay that their own Idioms ſink under their Imagination. But they would have more to complain of, if according to their Deſires the *Latin* was ſtill the Language of *Europe*; for in that Caſe, very little Room would be left for their Labours. A Multitude of ancient Authors more generally read and better underſtood would ſhut up all the Avenues to the Ambition of the Modern. To imitate *Virgil* or *Tully* would be a Plagiariſm, to deviate from them, an Affectation; The World overſtock'd with Models of Writing would diſcountenance any new Endeavour, and the greateſt Genius would be diſcouraged.

On the contrary, he who writes in a modern Language, hath the Ancients for his Guides, not for his Rivals; when he imitates them, he enriches his own Country; the particular Caſt of his Mother-tongue awakens his Imaginati-

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on into new Turns, and beſtows an air of Novelty on ſome Conceptions which otherwiſe would have appear'd too common. In ſhort every new Language occaſions ſome new Productions.

The *Italian* Tongue was at the end of the fifteenth Century brought to the Perfection, in which it continues now, and in which it will remain as long as *Taſſo* in Poetry, and *Machiavel* in Proſe ſhall be the Standart of the Stile.

Taſſo was in his Childhood, when *Triſſino* (the Author of the firſt Tragedy written in a modern Language) lanch'd out into the attempt of an *Epick* Poem. His Subject was *Italy* deliver'd from the *Goths* by *Belizarius* under *Juſtinian*. The Subject was noble, the Performance was mean, but ſtill ſucceeded, and this Dawning ſhone a little in a time of Darkneſs, till it was abſorb'd in the broad Day of *Taſſo*.

Triſſino was a Man of great Parts, and of extenſive Learning, he was employ'd by *Leo* the Tenth in many great Affairs, and had ſucceded very well in his Embaſſy to the Emperor *Charles* the Fifth. But at laſt he ſacrificed his Ambition, and worldly Affairs to his Paſſion for Letters, which at that Time were reputed honourable, becauſe they were newly reviv'd in *Europe*, and in the Glo-

ry of their Prime. He was juſtly fond of *Homer*, and yet his great Fault is to have imitated him; for Imitation requires more Art than is generally believed. The Flowers of the ancient appear but wither'd, when gather'd by unſkilful Hands. This I inſiſt upon, becauſe nothing is more common than Authors who mangle *Homer* and *Virgil* in their own Productions, and ſcreen themſelves under thoſe great Names, without ſuſpecting that the very Things, which are to be admired in *Virgil*, may be ridiculous in them.

Thus *Triſſino*, for Example, endeavours to imitate that beautiful paſſage of *Homer*, where *Juno* having ſummon'd all her Charms, and adorn'd with the Girdle of *Venus*, deludes her Huſband into an unuſual Fondneſs.

The Wife of *Juſtinian* hath the ſame Deſign upon her Huſband. Firſt ſhe waſhes herſelf in her fine Cloſet, ſhe puts on a clean Shift, and after the long enumeration of all the Trinkets of her Toilette, ſhe comes alone into a little Garden where the Emperor was ſitting down: She coins a Lie, ſhe allures him by ſome Coquettries, and at laſt the Emperor——

Le Diede un Bacio
Suave; é, le getto le braccia all collo.
E ella

E ella ſtette e ſorridendo diſſe.
Signor mio dolce hor che volete ſare?
Che ſe veniſſe alguno in queſto luogo
E ci vedeſſe, havrei tanta vergogna
Che piü non ardirei levar la fronte:
Entriamo nelle noſtre uſate ſtanze,
Chiudamo li uſci, e ſopra il voſtro letto
Ponianci, e ſate poi, quel che vi piace.
L'imperador riſpoſe; alma mia vita,
Non dubitate dela viſta altrui:
Che qui non puo venir perſona humana,
Senon per la mia Stanza. E io la chiuſi
Come qui venni, e ho la chiave a canto;
E penſo che ancor vi chiudeſte l'uſcio
Che vien in eſſo dele Stanze voſtre;
Perche giamai non lo laſciaſte aperto:
E detto queſto, ſubito abbraciolla;
Poi ſe colcar ne la minuta herbetta,
La quale allegra lii fiorriva d'intorno, &c.

" The Emperor gave her a Kiſs, and
" folded her tenderly in his Arms. She
" pauſed a little, and ſaid, O my Sweet
" Lord, what will you do! ſhould any
" body come hither and ſpye us, I could
" never ſhow my Face, for Shame: Let
" us ſtep into our Bed-Chamber, let
" us lock up all the Doors, and when
" we are together upon our Bed, you
" may do with me what you pleaſe. The

 " Em-

" Emperor anſwered, My Dear, my Soul!
" do not lie under any fear of being
" diſcovered: For not one living Soul
" can arrive at us but through my
" Chamber; I took care to ſhut the Door
" as I came hither, and I have the Key
" in my Pocket; I ſuppoſe too you have
" the Key of the Back-Door which o-
" pens from your Apartment into mine,
" for you never leave it open: he ſaid,
" and hugged her. The tender Graſs
" on which they dallied, rejoiced at their
" Pleaſures, and ſhot forth into tender
" Flowers.

Thus what is beautiful and noble between *Jove* and *Juno*, becomes as low and as diſtaſteful between the old *Juſtinian* and *Theodora*; as when among us, a Man and Wife careſs one another before Company.

Triſſino hath eſpecially endeavour'd to follow *Homer* in the Detail of the Deſcriptions; but he is very accurate in deſcribing the Furniture of the Houſes of his Heroes: He does not omit a Button, or a Garter in their Dreſſes; and does not ſay a Word of their Characters.

However, I do not mention him only to point out his Faults, but to give him the juſt Praiſes he deſerves; for having been the firſt in *Europe* who attempted

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an *Epick* Poem, in a vulgar Tongue, and in blank Verſe; for not having been Guilty of a ſingle Quibble in his Works, though he was an *Italian*; and for having introduc'd leſs Magicians, and fewer inchanted Heroes, than any Author of his Nation.

CAMOUENS.

WHILE *Triſſino* was clearing away the Rubbiſh in *Italy*, which Barbarity and Ignorance had heap'd up for ten Centuries, in the Way of the Arts and Sciences, *Camouens* in *Portugal* ſteer'd a new Courſe, and acquir'd a Reputation which laſts ſtill among his Countrymen, who pay as much Reſpect to his Memory, as the *Engliſh* to *Milton*.

He was a ſtrong Inſtance of the irreſiſtible Impulſe of Nature, which determines a true Genius to follow the Bent of his Talents, in Spight of all the Obſtacles which could check his Courſe.

His Infancy loſt amidſt the Idleneſs and Ignorance of the Court of *Liſbon*; his Youth ſpent in romantick Loves, or in the War againſt the *Moors*; his long Voyages at Sea, in his riper Years; his Misfortunes at Court, the Revolutions of his Country, none of all theſe could ſuppreſs his Genius.

Emanuel the ſecond King of *Portugal*,

having a Mind to find a new Way to the *Eaſt-Indies* by the Ocean, ſent *Velaſco de Gama* with a Fleet in the Year 1497, to that Undertaking, which being new, was accounted raſh and impracticable, and which of Courſe gain'd him a great Reputation when it ſucceeded.

Camouens follow'd *Velaſco de Gama* in that dangerous Voyage, led by his Friendſhip to him, and by a noble Curioſity, which ſeldom fails to be the Character of Men born with a great Imagination.

He took his Voyage for the Subject of his Poem; he enjoy'd the ſenſible Pleaſure, which no body had known before him, to celebrate his Friend, and the Things which he was an Eye-Witneſs of. He wrote his Poem, Part on the *Atlantic Sea*, and Part on the *Indian Shore*; I ought not to omit, that in a Shipwrack on the Coaſts of *Malabar*, he ſwam a Shore, holding-up his Poem in one Hand, which otherwiſe had been perhaps loſt for ever.

Such a new Subject, manag'd by an uncommon Genius, could not but produce a Sort of *Epick* Poetry unheard of before.

There no bloody Wars are fought, no Heroes wounded in a thouſand different Ways; no Woman enticed away, and the

the World over-turn'd for her Cauſe; no Empire founded; in ſhort nothing of what was deem'd before, the only Subject of Poetry.

The Poet conducts the *Portugueſe* Fleet to the Mouth of the *Ganges*, round the Coaſts of *Africk*. He takes Notice in the Way, of many Nations who live upon the *African* Shore. He interweaves artfully the Hiſtory of *Portugal*. The Simplicity of his Subject, is rais'd by ſome Fictions of different Kinds, which I think not improper to acquaint the Reader with.

When the Fleet is ſailing in the Sight of the *Cape of Good-Hope*, call'd then the *Cape of the Storms*, a formidable Shape appears to them, walking in the Depth of the Sea; his Head reaches to the Clouds, the Storms, the Winds, the Thunders, and the Lightnings hang about him; his Arms are extended over the Waves. 'Tis the Guardian of that foreign Ocean unplough'd before by any Ship. He complains of his being oblig'd to ſubmit to Fate, and to the audacious Undertaking of the *Portugueſe*, and foretels them all the Misfortunes which they muſt undergo in the *Indies*.

I believe, that ſuch a Fiction would be thought noble and proper, in all Ages, and in all Nations.

There

There is another, which perhaps would have pleas'd the *Italians* as well as the *Portugueſe*, but no other Nation beſides: It is an inchanted Iſland, call'd the Iſland of Bliſs, which the Fleet finds in her Way home, juſt riſing from the Sea, for their Comfort and for their Reward: *Camouens* deſcribes that Place, as *Taſſo* did ſome Years after, his Iſland of *Armida*. There a ſupernatural Power, brings in all the Beauties, and preſents all the Pleaſures which Nature can afford, and which the Heart may wiſh for; a Goddeſs enamour'd with *Velaſco de Gama*, carries him to the Top of an high Mountain, from whence ſhe ſhows him all the Kingdoms of the Earth, and foretells the Fate of *Portugal*.

After *Camouens* hath given looſe to his Fancy, in the laſcivious Deſcription of the Pleaſures which *Gama* and his Crew enjoy'd in the Iſland, he takes care to inform the Reader, that he ought to underſtand by this Fiction, nothing but the Satisfaction which the virtuous Man feels, and the Glory which accrues to him by the Practice of Virtue; but the beſt Excuſe for ſuch an Invention, is, the charming Stile in which it is deliver'd (if we believe the *Portugueſe*) for the Beauty of the Elocution makes ſometimes amends for the Faults of the Poets,

as

as the colouring of Rubens make ſome Defects in his Figures paſs unreguarded.

There is *another* Kind of *Machinery* continued throughout all the Poem, which nothing can excuſe, in any Country whatever; 'tis an unjudicious Mixture of the Heathen Gods with our Religion. *Gama* in a Storm addreſſes his Prayers to *Chriſt*, but 'tis *Venus* who comes to his Relief; the Heroes are *Chriſtians*, and the Poet *Heathen*. The main Deſign which the *Portugueſe* are ſuppos'd to have (next to the promoting of their Trade) is to propagate *Chriſtianity*; yet *Jupiter*, *Bacchus*, and *Venus*, have in their Hands, all the Management of the Voyage. So incongruous a *Machinery*, caſts a Blemiſh upon the whole Poem; yet ſhows at the ſame Time, how prevailing are its Beauties, ſince the *Portugueſe* like it with all its Faults.

Camouens hath a great deal of true Wit, and not a little Share of falſe; his Imagination hurries him into great Abſurdities.

I remember, that after *Velaſco de Gama*, hath related his Adventures to the King of *Melinda*, now ſays he, *O King, judge if* Ulyſſes, *and* Æneas, *have travell'd ſo far, and undergone ſo many Hardſhips,*

ſhips. As if that barbarous *African*, was acquainted with *Homer* and *Virgil*.

His Poem, in my Opinion, is full of numberleſs Faults and Beauties, thick ſown near one another; and almoſt in every Page, there is ſomething to laugh at, and ſomething to be delighted with. Among his moſt lucky Thoughts, I muſt take Notice of two for the Likeneſs, which they bear to two moſt celebrated Paſſages of *Waller* and Sir *John Denham*.

Waller ſays, in his Epiſtle to *Zelinda*;

Thy matchleſs Form will Credit bring,
To all the Wonders I can ſing.

Camouens ſays, in ſpeaking of the Voyages of the *Argonautes*, and of *Ulyſſes*, that the Undertaking of the *Portugueſe* ſhall give Credit to all thoſe Fables, in ſurpaſſing them.

Sir *John Denham*, in his Poem on *Coopers-Hill*, ſays to the *Thames*;

O could I flow like thee, and make thy Stream,
My great Example, as it is my Theme;
Tho' deep, yet clear, tho' gentle, yet not dull,
Strong without Rage, without o'erflowing full.

Camouens addreſſes the Nymphs of *Tagus* in the like Manner; " O Nymphs, " if ever I ſung of you, inſpire me now " with

" with new and ſtrong Lays; let my " Stile flow like your Waves; let it be " deep and clear, as your Waters, &c. "

It is not to be inferr'd from thence, that *Waller* and Sir *John Denham* have imitated *Camouens*; we muſt only conclude, that Wit is of the Growth of every Country. It is very unjuſt, and very common, to call Plagiariſm what is but Reſemblance.

TASSO.

TORQUATO Taſſo began his *Jeruſalem*, when *Camouens* was finiſhing his *Luſiada*. He us'd to ſay, that the only Rival he fear'd in *Europe* was *Camouens*. His Fear (if ſincere) was very ill-grounded; for he was as far ſuperior to him, as that *Portugueſe* excell'd the Poets of his own Country.

No Man in the World was ever born with a greater Genius, and more qualify'd for *Epick* Poetry. His Talents which gain'd him ſo great a Reputation, were the Cauſe of his Misfortunes. His Life prov'd a Chain of Miſeries and Woes. Baniſh'd from his own Country, he was reduc'd to the grievous Neceſſity of having a Patron. He ſuffer'd Want, Exile, and Priſon; and which is more intolerable, he was oppreſs'd by Calumny.

Even

Even his poetical Glory, that chimerical Comfort in real Calamities, was conteſted. The Number of his Enemies eclips'd for a long while his Reputation: And at laſt when his Merit began to overcome Envy, when he was ready to receive the Honour of Triumph in *Rome*, which *Petrarch* had formerly enjoy'd (though with leſs Merit) and which was at that Time as glorious as it is now ridiculous; he dy'd the very Day before the deſign'd Solemnity.

Nothing diſcovers more plainly the high Senſe which *Rome* entertain'd of his Merit, than the Inſcription on his Tomb.

The *Pope*, who order'd him a magnificent Funeral, as if it were to attone for the Misfortunes of his Life, propos'd a Reward for the beſt Epitaph which ſhould be written in his Honour.

Many were brought to him, all full of the juſt Praiſes of *Taſſo*. The Judges appointed to chuſe the Epitaph, were divided in their Opinions, when a young Man came to them with this Inſcription,

Torquati Taſſi oſſa.

The Judges immediately agreed in giving the Preference to it, being perſuaded,

ded, that the Name of *Taſſo* was his greateſt Encomium.

Time, which undermines the Reputation of indifferent Authors, hath ſtamp'd the Character of Immortality upon his Works. His Poem is ſung now-a-days in many Parts of *Italy*, as the Poems of *Homer* were in *Greece*; and if the Poets, his Succeſſors, have degenerated from him, if *Italy* is now over-grown with pitiful Sonnets and Conceits; ſtill the Taſte of the Nation form'd after his Poems remains in its full Force: He is admir'd by the Readers, though not imitated by the Writers. Thus in *France*, *Corneille*, *Racine*, *Boilau*, *la Fontaine*, *Moliere*, will claim forever the publick Admiration, in Defiance to a ſucceeding Set of Writers, who have introduc'd a new fangl'd Stile, kept up and cheriſh'd among themſelves, but deſpis'd by the Nation.

The *Jeruſalem liberata*, is in ſome Parts an Imitation of the *Iliad*. The Subject of *Taſſo*, is nobler than that of *Homer*, in as much, as all *Europe* riſing-up in Arms, for the Recovery of the Land which is conſecrated by the Birth and Blood of their God, ſtrikes the Mind with a more awful Idea, than *Greece* fighting againſt *Troy*, for *Helena*.

As to the Diſpoſition of ſo great a Work, the impartial Reader may judge if *Taſſo* is above, or under his Maſter, in what he copies from him.

Goffredo acts methinks the Part of *Agamemnon*, with as much Grandeur, leſs Pride, and more Wiſdom.

The Hermit *Piero* is the *Calcas*; and if I dare ſpeak my Opinion, I find nothing very ſhining nor defective in either.

Rinaldo, is among the *Chriſtian* Princes, what *Achilles* is among the *Grecian* Heroes. His Courage is full as boiſterous, but his Character more amiable. The Fall of *Jeruſalem* is reſerv'd to his Sword, as that of *Troy* to the Arms of *Achilles*. The Abſence of the one from the Camp, is borrow'd from the Inaction of the other; but certainly *Rinaldo* employs his Leiſure more to the Satisfaction of the Reader, than the Heroe of *Homer* does.

Aladino, Sultan of *Jeruſalem*, is in nothing like *Priam*, but in his being the King of the Town beſieg'd; and *Argante* bears no other Reſemblance to *Hector*, but in his being the firmeſt Bulwark of the City.

Certainly the Character of *Hector* is every way above that of *Argante*, and the grandeur of *Priam* more majeſtick, and his Misfortunes more touching than thoſe of *Aladino*.

ladin. I will not decide, if *Homer* hath done right or wrong, in gaining upon our Affections towards *Hector*, and in moving our Pity for *Priam*; but ſure it is, that if *Taſſo* had not repreſented *Aladin* and *Argante* rough and unamiable, if he had not ſkilfully created an Averſion to them, in the Mind of the Reader, he had defeated his own Intention; for in that Caſe, inſtead of being concern'd for the Cauſe of the *Chriſtian* Princes, we ſhould look upon them as Plunderers, united together to lay waſte a foreign Country, and to maſſacre in cold Blood, an old venerable *Eaſtern* Monarch, together with his innocent Subjects.

Taſſo hath learn'd from *Homer*, the Art of marking the different *Shades* of the ſame *Colour*, I mean the different *Kinds* of the ſame *Virtue*, of diſtinguiſhing the *Valiant* from the *Valiant*, and the *Prudent* from the *Prudent*, &c. Thus *Goffredo* is ſedate and wiſe, *Aladin* anxious and cruel. The generous Valour of *Tancrede*, ſhines in Oppoſition to the brutal Impetuoſity of *Argante*. Love in *Armida* is a Mixture of Coquettry and Rage, in *Herminia* a gentle Tenderneſs. Every one of his Actors is to be known by ſome diſtinguiſhable Mark,

as in the *Iliad*, and every one of them acts always ſuitable to his Character, which is not always to be found in *Homer*; and in that reſpect methinks he hath improv'd the Art which *Homer* taught him; but and Art which he learn'd from no body. 'Tis that inchanting Way of interreſting us for his Heroes, 'tis that unexpreſſible Addreſs in interweaving the different Adventures of the Poem, in leading us from the Alarms of Wars to the Allurements of Love, and from Love tho War again; in working up our Concern by Degrees, and in riſing above himſelf from Book to Book.

As to his Style, it is perſpicuous and elegant through all the Poem; and when he enters into Deſcriptions which require Strength and Majeſty, it is wonderful how the natural Effeminacy of the *Italian* Language ſoars up into Sublimity and Grandeur, and aſſumes a new Character in his Hands, if we except about an hundred Lines in which he flattens into pitiful Conceits, but I look on theſe Errors as a kind of Tribute, which his Genius condeſcended to pay to the *Italian* Taſte.

If his Excellencies challenge the unanimous Admiration of *Europe*, there are Faults in him which methinks are cenſur'd

ſur'd every where. The Epiſode of *Olinda* and *Sophronia* in the beginning of the Action ſeems defective in all reſpects.

The Poet introduces a *Mahometan* Magician call'd *Iſmeno*, who againſt the ſtrict and never violated Laws of the *Mahometan* Religion, carries an Image of the Virgin *Mary* into the principal *Moſquee*, in order to make it by the Force of his Enchantments the Pledge and Security of the Town, as formerly the Fate of *Troy* depended upon the *Palladium*. It happens one Night that the Image is ſtol'n away, the Chriſtians of *Jeruſalem* being ſuſpected of the Theft, the *Sultan* incens'd, ſentences them all to Death, that he might be ſure to puniſh the guilty in the common Slaughter. Mean while *Sophronia* a pious Chriſtian Virgin, comes before the *Sultan*. She ſaves her Countrymen by a generous Lie, ſhe declares that ſhe hath ſtol'n the Image. The King condems her to be burnt. *Olindo* her Lover endeavours to ſave her Life by another noble Lie, he takes the Guilt upon himſelf, and claims the Pile prepar'd for her. At laſt both are ſentenced to die, both are ty'd to the ſame ſtake, when of a ſudden arrives *Clorinda* from *Perſia*. She mov'd

with Pity towards them, and looking with Scorn upon the Sorcery of *Iſmeno*, aſks and obtains their Pardon. *Olindo* and *Sophronia* go from the Pile to their Church, Marry, and are no more heard of in the Poem.

Taſſo adorn'd that uſeleſs Epiſode with all the Pomp of Poetry, nay he is not ſparing of *Italian* Conceits in it. He dwells with ſo much Complacency upon the Deſcription of *Sophronia*, he ſpeaks of the Love of *Olindo* with ſo much Warmth, he excites ſo much Pity for them both, that every Reader cannot but believe that both are principal Characters in the Poem. He is amaz'd and angry afterwards to ſee them as uſeleſs to the Affairs of the Chriſtians, as the Image of Virgin *Mary* to the Infidels. All the Embelliſhments which *Taſſo* laviſhes upon ſuch a needleſs piece of Enchantment, and upon ſo prepoſterous an Epiſode ſerve but to render the Fault more conſpicuous.

All the World owns with the *Italians*, that nothing is ſo artfully deſcrib'd as the Coquettry of *Armida*, nothing ſo tender as her Love, nothing ſo animated and ſo moving as her Complaints. The Taſte of the *Engliſh* and of the *French*, tho' averſe to any Machinery grounded upon

upon Enchantment, muſt forgive, nay commend that of *Armida*, ſince it is the Source of ſo many Beauties. Beſides ſhe is a *Mahometan*, and the Chriſtian Religion allows us to believe that thoſe Infidels are under the immediate Influence of the Devil.

But indeed no body but an *Italian* can bear with the wild Exceſs, to which *Taſſo* hath carried that Machinery. Ten Chriſtian Princes turn'd into Fiſh in the Ponds of *Armida*, and a Parrot ſinging amorous Songs of his own making, are very ſtrange Things in the Eyes of a ſerious Reader, tho' one is precedented by the Story of *Circe* in *Homer*; and tho' the Parrots are thought among us to mimick now and then human Voices.

Still we ſhould eaſily forgive ſuch poetical Extravagancies for the ſake of the Beauties which are mingled with them. Let the Devils (ſince they are admitted) have a free Scope to play their wild Pranks, eſpecially in *Italy*, where the Superſtition of the People brings Credit to no leſs ſtrange Tales.

But it is unaccountable how Men of Senſe can approve of the Chriſtian Magicians, who help *Rinaldo* out of the Hands of the *Mahometan* Wizards. It is ſingular to ſee in *Taſſo* Lewdneſs, Maſs, Confeſſi-

on, the Litanies of the Saints, and pieces of Witchcraft heap'd together.

What ſtrange Fancy! to ſend *Ubaldo* and his Companion to an old *holy Conjurer*, who carries them *juſt into the Center of the Earth*. The two Knights walk there on the Banks of a Rivulet cover'd with precious Stones of all Kinds. From that Place they are ſent to *Aſcalon* to an old Woman who carries them ſwiftly in a little Ship to the *Canary* Iſlands. Thither they arrive in the Name of God, holding in their Hands a magick Wand, they perform their Ambaſſy, they carry *Rinaldo* back with them to the Camp of the Chriſtians; for the Army was in need of him. But what was the great Exploit which muſt neceſſarily be perform'd by *Rinaldo*, and by him only?

He was deſtin'd by Providence, and brought by Enchantment from the pic of *Teneriff* to *Jeruſalem*, in order to cut down ſome Trees in a Foreſt inhabited by Elves and Hoggoblings. That Foreſt is the great Machinery of *Taſſo*. It is remarkable that in the former Books God almighty orders his Archangel *Michael* to drive down into Hell the Devils who were let looſe in the Air, raiſing Storms, and managing his Thunders againſt the Chriſtians in Favour of the *Mahometans*. *Michael* forbids them ſtrictly to meddle

any

any more in thoſe Affairs. They obey and plundge into Hell immediately; but ſoon after the Enchanter *Iſmeno* recalls them out, they find Means to elude the Orders of God, and under the pretence of ſome *Jeſuitical* Diſtinctions, they take Poſſeſſion of the Foreſt, wherein the Chriſtians intended to provide the Timber neceſſary to build a wooden Tower.

There they aſſume innumerable Shapes to frighten away thoſe who come to cut the Trees. There *Tancred* finds his *Clorinda* after her Death ſhut up in a Pine, and bleeding for the Blow which he ſtrikes at the Root. There *Armida* peeps out of a Mirtle, while ſhe is ſome Miles off, in the *Ægyptian* Army, and totally unappris'd of her being in two Places at once, tho' ſhe is the beſt Sorcereſs in the World. At laſt the Prayers of the *Hermit* and the Merit of *Rinaldo*'s Contrition after his Confeſſion, break the Enchantment.

Methinks it is not very foreign to the Purpoſe to ſee how differently *Lucan* hath handled in his *Pharſalia* a Topick pretty much of the ſame Nature. 'Tis when *Cæſar* orders his Troops to cut down ſome Tres in the ſacred Foreſt of *Marſeilles*, to have them made into warlike Inſtruments. The Paſſage deſerves to be

ſet in its full Length, as it is tranſlated by the late Mr. *Rowe*.

Not far away, for Ages paſt had ſtood
An old inviolated ſacred Wood;
Whoſe gloomy Boughs, thick interwoven, made
A chilly chearleſs everlaſting Shade,
There, nor the ruſtick Gods, nor Satyr's *Sport,*
Nor Fauns and Syluans with the Nymphs reſort:
But barb'rous Prieſts ſome dreadful Pow'r adore,
And luſtrate ev'ry Tree with human Gore.
If Myſteries in times of old receiv'd,
And pious Ancientry be yet believ'd,
There nor the feather'd Songſter builds her Neſt,
Nor lonely dens conceal the ſavage Beaſt:
There no tempeſtuous Winds preſume to fly,
Ev'n Lightnings Glance aloof, and ſhoot obliquely by,
No wanton Breezes toſs's the dancing Leaves,
But ſhiv'ring Horror in the Branches heaves.
Black Springs with pitchy Streams divide the Ground,
And bubbling tumble with a ſullen Sound.
Old Images of Forms miſ-ſhapen ſtand,
Rude and unknowing of the Artiſt's Hand;
With hoary Filth begrim'd each ghaſtly Head
Strikes the eſtoniſh'd Gazer's Soul with Dread.
No Gods, who long in common Shapes appear'd,
Were e'er with ſuch Religious Awe rever'd:
But zealous Crouds in Ignorance adore;
And ſtill the leſs they know, they fear the more.

The pious Worſhippers approach not near,
But ſhun their Gods, and kneel with diſtant Fear:
The Prieſt himſelf, when, or the Day, or Night,
Rowling have reach'd their full meridian Height,
Refrains the gloomy Paths with wary Feet,
Dreading the Dæmon *of the Grove to meet;*

Who,

Who, terrible to Sight, at that fix'd Hour,
Still treads the ground about his dreery Bow'r.
This Wood near neighb'ring to th' encompaſs'd Town,
Untouch'd by former Wars remain'd alone;
And ſince the Country round it naked ſtands,
From hence the Latian *chief Supplies demands.*
But lo! the bolder Hands, that ſhould have ſtruck,
With ſome unuſual Horror trembling Shook;
With ſilent Dread and Rev'rence they ſurvey'd,
The Gloom Majeſtick of the ſacred Shade:
None dares with impious Steel the Bark to rend,
Leaſt on himſelf the deſtin'd ſtroke deſcend.
Cæſar perceiv'd the ſpreading Fear to grow,
Then Eager, caught an Ax, and aim'd a Blow:
Deep ſunk within a violated Oak
The wounding Edge, and thus the Warrior ſpoke.
Now, let no doubting Hand the Taſk decline:
Cut you the Wood, and let the Guilt be mine.
The trembling Bands unwillingly obey'd;
Two various Ills were in the Ballance laid,
And Cæſar's *Wrath againſt the Gods was weigh'd.*

I confeſs that the whole *Pharſalia* is not to be compar'd to the *Jeruſalem* of *Taſſo*. But at leaſt that particular Paſſage ſhows how the true Grandeur of a real Hero is above the *Romantick*, and how ſolid and ſtrong Throughts excell thoſe Inventions, which the Crowd calls poetical Beauties, and on which wiſe Men look down as Tales fit for Children.

The *Virtuoſi* in *Italy* have diſputed for a long while and ſtill conteſt which of the two *Arioſto* or *Taſſo* deſerves the Precedency. But every where elſe the chief-

eſt

eſt Exception that Men of Underſtanding take to *Taſſo*, is that of having too much of *Arioſto* in him. *Taſſo* ſeems to have been conſcious of this Fault. He could not be unſenſible that ſuch wild fairy Tales, at that Time ſo much in Faſhion not in *Italy* only but in all *Europe*, were altogether inconſiſtent with the Gravity of *Epick* Poetry: In order to cover this Defect he printed a Preface, in which he pretends that all his Poem is but a ſhadow and a Type.

The Army of the Chriſtian Princes, ſays he, repreſents the Body and the Soul. *Jeruſalem* the figure of true Happineſs, which cannot be obtain'd but by Labour and Difficulties. *Goffredo* is the Mind, *Tancredo*, *Raimondo*, &c. are the faculties of the Mind. The common Soldiers make up the Limbs of the Body. The Devils are at once figur'd, and figures, (*figura è figurato.*) *Armida* and *Iſmeno* are the Temptations which beſiege our Souls. The Spells and the Illuſions of the inchanted Foreſt ſhadow out the falſe Reaſoning, (*falſi ſillogiſmi*) into which our Paſſions are apt to miſlead us,

Such is the Key that *Taſſo* thinks fit to give us of his Works. He deals with himſelf as the Commentators have done with *Homer* and *Virgil*. Thoſe Gentlemen are like ſpeculative and dully wiſe

Po-

Politicians, who conſtrue the moſt inſignificant Actions of great Men, into Deſigns of the greateſt Depth and Importance. But *Taſſo* was like that Ambaſſador, who having ſpent all the Time of his Ambaſſy in Debauchery and Riot, wrote to his Maſter that he was whoring and drinking for the Service of his Majeſty.

However the ridiculous Explanation, which *Taſſo* gives with ſo much Gravity of his Extravagancies, cannot impoſe upon Mankind; for we no more allow an Author to coment upon himſelf, than a Prieſt to prophecy of himſelf.

If the Devils act in *Taſſo*, the inſipid part of deſpiſable Jugglers, on the other Hand what is relating to Religion, is writ with Majeſty, and I dare ſay in the Spirit of Religion itſelf. Nay Proceſſions and Litanies, and all the Parts of *Popiſh* Religion, which are accounted comical and mean in *England*, appear in a reverend Awfulneſs in that Poem. So prevalent is the Art of Poetry when it exerts itſelf in its full Force, and ſo peculiar to it is the Power of raiſing what is low, and of enlarging the Sphere of all Things.

He is guilty of indulging the inaccurate Cuſtom of calling the evil Spirits by the Names of *Pluto*, *Alecto*, and

of

of mingling often *Pagan* Ideas with *Chriſtian* Mythology. 'Tis ſtrange that none of the modern Poets are free from that Fault. It ſeems that our Devils and our Chriſtian Hell have ſomething in them low and mean, and muſt be rais'd by the Hell of the *Pagans*, which owes its Dignity to its Antiquity. Certain it is that the Hell of the Goſpel is not ſo fitted for Poetry as that of *Homer* and *Virgil*. The Name of *Tiſiphone* ſounds better than that of *Beelzebub*; but with all that, it is as prepoſterous in a Poet to bring *Michael* and *Alecto* together, as in ſome *Italian* and *Flemiſh* Painters to have repreſented the Virgin *Mary* with a Chapelet of Beads hanging at her Girdle, to have plac'd ſome *Swiſs* Guards at the Door of the Apartment of *Pharao*, and to have mix'd Cannons and Carabines with the ancient Arrows in the Battle of *Joſuah*.

Don Alonzo d'Ercilla y Cuniga.

AT the End of the ſixteenth Century, *Spain* produc'd an *Epick* Poem, famous for ſome peculiar Beauties that ſhine in it, as well as for the Singularity of its Subject, but ſtill more illuſtrious by the Character of the Author.

Alonzo

Alonzo of *Ercilla y Cuniga*, Gentleman of the Bed-Chamber to the Emperor *Maximilian*, was bred up in the Houſe of *Philip* the ſecond, and fought under his Orders, at the Battle of *St. Quentin*, where the *French* were utterly defeated.

Philip, after ſuch a Succeſs, being leſs deſirous to augment his Glory abroad, than to ſettle his Affairs at home, went back to *Spain*. The young *Alonzo* of *Ercilla*, led by an inſatiable Avidity of true Learning, I mean of knowing Men, and of ſeeing the World, travell'd through all *France*, ſaw *Italy*, *Germany*, and ſtay'd a long while in *England*. Whilſt he was in *London*, he heard ſome Provinces of *Peru*, and *Chily*, had taken Arms againſt the *Spaniards*, their Conquerors; which ſtruggle for their Liberty, is by the by, ſtil'd Rebellion by the *Spaniſh* Authors. His Thirſt of Glory, and his eager Deſire of ſeeing, and doing new and ſingular Things, carry'd him without any Heſitation, or Delay, into thoſe Countries. He went to *Chily*, at the Head of few Troops, and he ſtay'd in theſe Parts all the Time of the War.

Near the Borders of *Chily*, towards the *South*, lies a ſmall mountainous Country, call'd *Araucana*, inhabited by a Race of Men, ſtronger and more fierce, than all the Nations of that new World. They fought

fought for their Liberty, longer than the other *Americans*, and were the laſt who were ſubdu'd. *Alonzo* waged againſt them a toilſome and dangerous War, underwent inexpreſſible hardſhips, ſaw and atchiev'd the moſt ſurpriſing Deeds, the Prize whereof was only the Honour of reducing ſome Rocks and barren Countries, in another Hemiſphere, to the Crown of *Spain*.

Alonzo, in the Courſe of that War, conceiv'd the Idea to immortalize his Enemies and himſelf, he was at once the Conqueror and the Poet. He made uſe of the Intervals of the War to ſing it, and as he wanted Paper, he wrote the firſt Part of his Poem upon little Pieces of Leather, which afterwards he had much ado to ſet right, and to bring together. The Poem is call'd the *Araucana*, from the Name of the Country.

It begins with a geographical Account of *Chily*, and with a Deſcription of the Manners and Cuſtoms of the People; ſuch a Beginning, which would be quite flat and intolerable in any other Poem, is neceſſary, and not unpleaſant in a Subject where the Scene lies under the other Tropick, and where the Heroes he writes of, are barbarous *Americans*, who muſt have been for ever unknown,

if

if he had not conquer'd and celebrated them.

As the Subject was quite new, ſo it gave Birth to new Thoughts. There is one which I preſent to the Readers, both as an Example of Novelty, and as a Spark of the Fire which animated ſometimes the Author.

" The *Araucani*, *ſays he*, were ſurpris'd " at firſt, to ſee Creatures like Men, with " Fire in their Hands, and dreadful Mon- " ſters fighting under them. They thought " they were the immortal Gods, deſcend- " ing from above, with Thunder and De- " ſtruction. They ſubmitted, though with " Reluctance; but afterwards being more " acquainted with their Conquerors, they " ſaw their Vices, and judg'd they were " Men; then on a ſudden, aſham'd of be- " ing oppreſs'd by their fellow Mortals, " they ſwore by their Shame, to waſh off " their Error with the Blood of the Decei- " vers, and to execute a Vengeance exem- " plary, dreadful, and irrevocable. "

It will be uſefull perhaps, to take Notice of a Paſſage in the ſecond Book, which bears a near Reſemblance to the Beginning of the *Iliad*, and which being handled quite differently, deſerves to be preſented to the little Number of impartial Readers, that they may judge between *Homer* and *Alonzo* in that particular.

lar. The firſt Action of the *Araucana*, is a Quarrel which happen'd between all the barbarous Chiefs, as in *Homer* between *Achilles* and *Agamemnon*. The Diſpute was not about a Woman, but about the Right of commanding the Army. Every one of thoſe ſavage Warriors aſſumes an uncontroul'd Behaviour upon the Conſciouſneſs of his own Worth, and at laſt the Diſpute grew ſo high, that they were ready to fight one againſt another, when one of the Caſiques call'd *Colocolo*, as old as *Neſtor*, and leſs boaſting of himſelf, than the *Grecian*, made the following Speech.

" Caſiques, ye illuſtrious Defenders " of our Country, the vain Deſire of " Empire does not move me to ſpeak " to you. I do not complain that you " all contend ſo eagerly for an Honour " which perhaps is due to my old Age, " and ſhould adorn my Decline. 'Tis " my Love to you, 'tis the Duty that I " owe to my Country, which forces me " to intreat you to attend to my feeble " Voice. Alas! How can we be ſo aſ- " ſuming, as to pretend to any Gran- " deur whatever, and to claim honoura- " ble Titles, we, who have been Sub- " jects, nay, miſerable Slaves, to the " *Spaniards*. Your Anger, Caſiques, " your Fury, would be better employ'd

" againſt

" againſt our Tyrants; why do you turn
" againſt your Breaſts, thoſe Arms which
" might exterminate your Enemies, and
" revenge our World? Ah! If Death
" be your Deſire, ſeek a Death that is
" honourable! Shake of the ſhameful
" Yoke with one Hand, aſſault the *Spa-*
" *niards* with the other, and ſhed not
" in an unprofitable Quarrel, thoſe laſt
" Drops of Blood of this State, which
" the Gods have left in it for its Re-
" venge. I am not diſpleas'd, I confeſs,
" to ſee the undaunted Haughtineſs of
" your Courages. This very Fierceneſs
" which I blame, heightens the Hopes
" I conceive of our Deſigns; but let not
" your ill-govern'd Valour prey upon
" itſelf, and deſtroy with its own Force,
" the Country you riſe to defend. If
" you perſiſt in your Quarrels, let your
" Swords firſt be imbru'd in my Blood,
" already frozen with old Age. I have
" liv'd too long. Happy is he who dies
" before his Countrymen are unfortu-
" nate, and unfortunate by their own
" Fault. Attend then to what I dare
" propoſe for your Welfare. Your Va-
" lour, O Caſiques, is equal, you are
" all equally illuſtrious by the Honours
" of the War, by your Birth, by your
" Power and Riches, your Souls are
" noble in an equal Degree, all worthy

" to command, and able to ſubdue our " World. Thoſe heavenly Gifts are " the preſent Subject of your great Con- " teſts, you want a Chief, and every " one of you is equal to that noble " Charge; then ſince there is no Dif- " ference between your Courages, let " the Strength of the Body decide what " the Equality of your Virtues would " keep undecided forever, &c. "

Then that old Man propoſes a Game, fit only for a barbarous Nation, and conſequently very proper. It was to carry a ponderous Beam, and he who could ſuſtain the Weight longeſt, was to be the Chief.

Now ſince the beſt Way of improving our Taſte, is that of comparing together Things of the ſame Nature, let us bring in the Diſcourſe of *Neſtor*, in Oppoſition to this of *Colocolo*, and laying aſide that Worſhip, which our Minds juſtly prejudiced pay to the great Name of *Homer*, let the Reader weigh the two Speeches in the Ballance of Equity and Reaſon.

As ſoon as *Achilles* warn'd and inſpir'd by *Minerva*, the Goddeſs of Wiſdom, has call'd *Agamemnon* Drunkard, Dog, and Stag, the wiſe *Neſtor* aroſe to calm the ruffled Minds of thoſe Heroes, and among other Things which I wave, to come cloſely to the Point of Compariſon,

Compariſon, thus he ſaid, " What a Sa-
" tisfaction will it be to the *Trojans*,
" when they hear of your Diſſentions!
" Young Men, you muſt reſpect my
" Years, and ſubmit to my Wiſdom, I
" have liv'd in my Youth with Heroes,
" by far ſuperior to you, no, my Eyes
" will never ſee ſuch Men as the un-
" daunted *Pirithous*, the bold *Ceneus*, the
" divine *Theſeus*, &c. I went to war
" with them, and though younger, I
" ſway'd their Strength by my perſua-
" ſive Eloquence; they liſtn'd to, they
" obey'd *Neſtor*. If in my early Years
" they deem'd me ſo wiſe; you, young
" Warriors, attend to the Advice of
" my old Age. *Atrides*, do not ſeize on
" the Slave of *Achilles*, you Son of *The-*
" *tis*, do not treat our Prince with
" Pride. *Achilles* is the greateſt, the
" moſt couragious of the Warriors, *A-*
" *gamemnon* is the greateſt of Kings,
" *&c.* " Thus ſpoke the wiſe *Neſtor*, and his Speech prov'd entirely ineffectual, for *Agamemnon* commended his Eloquence, and neglected the Advice.

Let the Readers conſider on one Part, the Endearments by which the barbarous *Colocolo* ingratiates himſelf into the Favour of the Caſiques, the awful Majeſty with which he checks their Animoſity, the Tenderneſs with which he ſof-

tens their Boiſterouſneſs, how the Love of his Country animates him, how the true Senſe of Glory enlivens his Speech, in what a prudent Manner he praiſes their Valour, when he curbs their Fury, with what Art, he gives Superiority to none, and is at the ſame Time an inoffenſive Cenſor, and a noble Panegyriſt: So that all ſubmit to his Reaſon, and comply with his Advice, confeſſing the Force of his Eloquence, not by empty Commendations, but by a ſudden Obedience.

On the other Side, one may judge, if *Neſtor* is ſo wiſe in talking ſo much of his Wiſdom, if it is a good Way to reconcile the Attention of the *Greek* Princes, by telling them that they are by far inferior to their Fore-fathers; if to ſay to *Agamemnon*, that *Achilles* is the moſt valorous of the preſent Chiefs, ought to be very acceptable to *Agamemnon*; and after having compar'd the haughty Talkativeneſs of *Neſtor*, with the modeſt Eloquence of *Colocolo*; the Injury offered by one to all the *Greeks*, by the offenſive Superiority aſcrib'd to their Predeceſſors, with the engaging Praiſes beſtow'd upon the Caſiques then preſent: The odious Compariſon betwen the Power of *Agamemnon*, and the Valour of *Achilles*; with that equal Share of Grandeur and Courage

Courage artfully-extoll'd in all the Caſiques: Then let the Reader pronounce. And if there is a General in the World, who would hear his inferior preferr'd to him in Point of Courage, if there is any Aſſembly who would bear without Reſentment a Speaker talking to them with Contempt, and villifying them, by extolling at their Expence their Predeceſſors, let then *Homer* be preferr'd to *Alonzo* in that Particular.

It is true, that if *Alonzo* is above *Homer* in this Point, he is in all the reſt inferior to the meaneſt of the Poets. It is wonderful, how he falls ſo low from ſo high a Flight. There is undoubtedly a great deal of Fire in his Battles, but no Deſign, no Invention, no Variety in the Deſcriptions, no Unity in the whole Frame; the Poem is more wild, then the Nations who are the Subject of it. In the latter End of the Work, *Alonzo*, who is one of the chief Actors in the Poem, makes a long and tedious March with ſome Soldiers by Night; and to divert the Time, he raiſes a Diſpute between them about *Virgil*, and chiefly on the Epiſode of *Dido*; *Alonzo* takes his Opportunity, in the Converſation of relating the Hiſtory of *Dido*, as it is reported by ſome antient Authors, and in order to give the Lie to *Virgil*, and to reſtore *Dido* to her for-

mer Glory, he ſpends two long Canto's in deſcanting upon her.

One of the greateſt Exceptions beſides, which may be taken againſt it, is that the Book conſiſts of thirty ſix long Cantos. The Reader will think it probable, that a Man who does not know how to ſtop, is not qualified to run ſuch a Carrier.

So many Defects have not deterred the celebrated *Michel Cervantes* from writing, that the *Araucana* may cope with the beſt Authors of *Italy*.

The Judgment of *Cervantes* was miſled in that Point by an overweaning Inclination towards his Countrymen. The true Love of our Country is to do good to it, to contribute to its Liberty, as far as it lies in our Power; but to contend only for the Superiority of our Authors, to boaſt of having among us better Poets than our Neighbours, is rather Self-love than Patriotiſm.

MILTON.

MILTON is the laſt in *Europe* who wrote an *Epick* Poem, for I wave all thoſe whoſe Attempts have been unſucceſsful, my Intention being not to deſcant on the many who have contended for the Prize, but to ſpeak only of the very

very few who have gain'd it in their reſpective Countries.

Milton, as he was travelling through *Italy* in his Youth, ſaw at *Florence* a Comedy call'd *Adamo*, writ by one *Andreino* a Player, and dedicated to *Mary de Medicis* Queen of *France*. The Subject of the Play was the *Fall of Man*; the Actors, God, the Devils, the Angels, *Adam*, *Eve*, the Serpent, Death, and the Seven mortal Sins. That Topick ſo improper for a Drama, but ſo ſuitable to the abſurd Genius of the *Italian* Stage, (as it was at that Time) was handled in a Manner intirely conformable to the Extravagance of the Deſign. The Scene opens with a Chorus of Angels, and a Cherubim thus ſpeaks for the Reſt. "Let the Rainbow be "the Fiddleſtick of the Fiddle of the "Heavens, let the Planets be the Notes "of our Muſick, let Time beat careful-"ly the Meaſure, and the Winds make "the Sharps, &c." Thus the Play begins, and every Scene riſes above the firſt in Profuſion of Impertinence.

Milton pierc'd through the Abſurdity of that Performance to the hidden Majeſty of the Subject, which being altogether unfit for the Stage, yet might be (for the Genius of *Milton*, and for his only) the Foundation of an *Epick* Poem.

He took from that ridiculous Trifle the firſt Hint of the nobleſt Work, which human Imagination hath ever attempted, and which he executed more than twenty Years after.

In the like Manner *Pythagoras* ow'd the Invention of Muſik to the Noiſe of the Hammer of a Blackſmith. And thus in our Days Sir *Iſaak Newton* walking in his Gardens had the firſt Thought of his Syſtem of Gravitation, upon ſeeing an Apple falling from a Tree.

If the Difference of Genius between Nation and Nation, ever appear'd in its full Light, 'tis in *Milton*'s Paradiſe loſt.

The *French* anſwer with a ſcornful Smile, when they are told there is in *England* an *Epick* Poem, the Subject whereof is the Devil fighting againſt God, and *Adam* and *Eve* eating an Apple at the Perſuaſion of a Snake. As that Topick hath afforded nothing among them, but ſome lively Lampoons, for which that Nation is ſo famous; they cannot imagine it poſſible to build an *Epick* Poem upon the Subject of their Ballads. And indeed ſuch an Error ought to be excuſed; for if we conſider with what Freedom the politeſt Part of Mankind throughout all *Europe*, both Catholicks and Proteſtants, are wont to ridicule in Converſation thoſe conſecrated

Hiſto-

Hiſtories; nay if thoſe who have the higheſt Reſpect for the Myſteries of the Chriſtian Religion, and who are ſtruck with Awe at ſome Parts of it, yet cannot forbear now and then making free with the *Devil*, the *Serpent*, the Frailty of our firſt Parents, the Rib which *Adam* was robb'd of, and the like; it ſeems a very hard Taſk for a profane Poet to endeavour to remove thoſe Shadows of Ridicule, to reconcile together what is Divine and what looks abſurd, and to command a Reſpect that the ſacred Writers could hardly obtain from our frivolous Minds.

What *Milton* ſo boldly undertook, he perform'd with a ſuperior Strength of Judgment, and with an Imagination productive of Beauties not dream'd of before him. The Meaneſs (if there is any) of ſome Parts of the Subject is loſt in the Immenſity of the Poetical Invention. There is ſomething above the reach of human Forces to have attempted the Creation without Bombaſt, to have deſcrib'd the Gluttony and Curioſity of a Woman without Flatneſs, to have brought Probability and Reaſon amidſt the Hurry of imaginary Things belonging to another World, and as far remote from the Limits of our Notions as they

are

are from our Earth; in ſhort to force the Reader to ſay, "If God, if the Angels, "if Satan would ſpeak, I believe they "would ſpeak as they do in *Milton*.

I have often admir'd how barren the Subject appears, and how fruitful it grows under his Hands.

The *Paradiſe Loſt* is the only Poem wherein are to be found in a perfect Degree that Uniformity which ſatisfies the Mind and that Variety which pleaſes the Imagination. All its Epiſodes being neceſſary Lines which aim at the Centre of a perfect Circle. Where is the Nation who would not be pleas'd with the Interview of *Adam* and the *Angel*? With the Mountain of Viſion, with the bold Strokes which make up the Relentleſs, undaunted and ſly Character of Satan? But above all with that ſublime Wiſdom which *Milton* exerts, whenever he dares to deſcribe God, and to make him ſpeak? He ſeems indeed to draw the Picture of the Almighty, as like as human Nature can reach to, through the mortal Duſt in which we are clouded.

The *Heathens* always, the *Jews* often, and our Chriſtian Prieſts ſometimes, repreſent God as a Tyrant infinitely powerful. But the God of *Milton* is always a Creator, a Father, and a Judge, nor is his Vengeance jarring with his Mercy,

nor

nor his Predeterminations repugnant to the Liberty of Man. Theſe are the Pictures which lift up indeed the Soul of the Reader. *Milton* in that Point as well as in many others is as far above the ancient Poets as the Chriſtian Religion is above the *Heathen* Fables.

But he hath eſpecially an undiſputable Claim to the unanimous Admiration of Mankind, when he deſcends from thoſe high Flights to the natural Deſcription of human Things. It is obſervable that in all other Poems Love is repreſented as a Vice, in *Milton* only 'tis a Virtue. The Pictures he draws of it, are naked as the Perſons he ſpeaks of, and as venerable. He removes with a chaſte Hand the Veil which covers every where elſe the enjoyments of that Paſſion. There is Softneſs, Tenderneſs and Warmth without Laſciviouſneſs; the Poet tranſports himſelf and us, into that State of innocent Happineſs in which *Adam* and *Eve* continued for a ſhort Time: He ſoars not above human, but above corrupt Nature, and as there is no Inſtance of ſuch Love, there is none of ſuch Poetry.

How then it came to paſs that the *Paradiſe Loſt* had been ſo long neglected, (nay almoſt unknown) in *England*, (till the Lord *Sommers* in ſome Meaſure *taught Man-*

Mankind to admire it,) is a Thing which I cannot reconcile, *neither* with the Temper, *nor* with the Genius of the *Engliſh* Nation.

The Duke of *Buckingham* in his Art of Poetry gives the Preference to *Spencer*. It is reported in the Life of the Lord *Rocheſter*, that he had no Notion of a better Poet than *Cowley*.

Mr. *Dryden*'s Judgment on *Milton* is ſtill more unaccountable. He hath beſtow'd ſome Verſes upon him, in which he puts him upon a Level with, nay above *Virgil* and *Homer*;

The Force of Nature could not further go,
To make a third ſhe join'd the former two.

The ſame Mr. *Dryden* in his Preface upon his Tranſlation of the *Æneid*, ranks *Milton* with *Chapellain* and *Le moine* the moſt impertinent Poets who ever ſcribbled. How he could extol him ſo much in his Verſes, and debaſe him ſo low in his Proſe is a Riddle which, being a Foreigner, I cannot underſtand.

In ſhort one would be apt to think that *Milton* has not obtained his true Reputation till Mr. *Adiſſon* the beſt critick as well as the beſt Writer of his Age, pointed out the moſt hidden Beauties of the *Paradiſe Loſt*, and ſettled for ever its Reputation.

It is an eaſy and a pleaſant Taſk to take Notice of the many Beauties of *Milton* which I call univerſal: But 'tis a tickliſh Undertaking to point out what would be reputed a Fault in any other Country.

I am very far from thinking that one Nation ought to judge of its Productions by the Standard of another, nor do I preſume that the *French* (for Example) who have no *Epick* Poets, have any Right to give Laws on *Epick* Poetry.

But I fancy many *Engliſh* Readers, who are acquainted with the *French* Language, will not be diſpleas'd to have ſome Notion of the Taſte of that Country: And I hope they are too juſt either to ſubmit to it, or deſpiſe it barely upon the Score of its being foreign to them.

Would each Nation attend a little more than they do, to the Taſte and the Manners of their reſpective Neighbours, perhaps a general good Taſte might diffuſe itſelf through all *Europe* from ſuch an intercourſe of Learning, and from that uſeful Exchange of Obſervations. The *Engliſh* Stage, for Example, might be clear'd of mangled Carcaſſes and the Style of their tragick Authors, come down from their forced Metaphorical Bombaſt to a nearer Imitation of Nature. The *French* would learn from the *Engliſh* to animate their Tragedies with more

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Action, and would contract now and then their long Speeches into ſhorter and warmer Sentiments.

The *Spaniards* would introduce in their Plays more Pictures of human Life, more Characters and Manners, and not puzzle themſelves always in the Entanglements of confus'd Adventures, more romantick than natural. The *Italian* in Point of Tragedy would catch the Flame from the *Engliſh*, and all the Reſt from the *French*. In Point of Comedy, they would learn from Mr. *Congreve* and ſome other Authors, to prefer Wit and Humour to Buffoonery.

To proceed in that View, I'ill venture to ſay that none of the *French* Criticks could like the Excurſions which *Milton* makes ſometimes beyond the ſtrict Limits of his Subject. They lay down for a Rule that an Author himſelf ought never to appear in his Poem; and his own Thoughts, his own Sentiments muſt be ſpoken by the Actors he introduces. Many judicious Men in *England* comply with that Opinion, and Mr. *Adiſſon* favours it. I beg Leave in this Place to hazard a Reflexion of my own, which I ſubmit to the Reader's Judgment.

Milton breaks the Thread of his Narration in two Manners. The firſt conſiſts of two or three kinds of Prologues, which

which he premiſes at the Beginning of ſome Books. In one Place he expatiates upon his own Blindneſs; in another he compares his Subject and prefers it to that of the *Iliad*, and to the common Topicks of War, which were thought before him the only Subject fit for *Epick* Poetry; and he adds that he hopes to ſoar as high as all his Predeceſſors, unleſs the cold Climate of *England damps his Wings*.

His other Way of interrupting his Narration, is by ſome Obſervations which he interſperſes now and then upon ſome great Incident, or ſome intereſting Circumſtance. Of that Kind is his Digreſſion on Love in the fourth Book;

Whatever Hippocrites *auſterely talk*
Defaming as impure, what God declares
Pure, and commands to ſome, leaves free to all.
Our Maker bids increaſe, who bids abſtain
But our Deſtroyer foe to God and Men?
Hail wedded Love, &c.

As to the firſt of theſe two Heads, I cannot but own that an Author is generally guilty of an impardonable Self-love, when he lays aſide his Subject to deſcant on his own Perſon; but that human Frailty is to be forgiven in *Milton*; nay I am pleas'd with it. He gratifies the Curioſity it raiſes in me about his Perſon, when I admire the Author, I deſire

to

to know ſomething of the Man, and he whom all Readers would be glad to know, is allow'd to ſpeak of himſelf. But this however is a very dangerous Example for a Genius of an inferior Order, and is only to be juſtified by Succeſs.

As to the ſecond Point I am ſo far from looking on that Liberty as a Fault, that I think it to be a great Beauty. For if Morality is the aim of Poetry, I do not apprehend why the Poet ſhould be forbidden to interſperſe his Deſcriptions with moral Sentences and uſeful Reflexions, provided he ſcatters them with a ſparing Hand, and in proper Places either when he wants Perſonages to utter thoſe Thoughts, or when their Character does not permit them to ſpeak in the Behalf of Virtue.

'Tis ſtrange that *Homer* is commended by the Criticks for his comparing *Ajax* to an Aſs pelted away with Stones by ſome Children, *Ulyſſes* to a Pudding, the Council-board of *Priam* to Graſhoppers: 'Tis ſtrange, I ſay, that they defend ſo clamouroufly thoſe Similes tho' never ſo foreign to the Purpoſe, and will not allow the natural Reflexions, the noble Digreſſions of *Milton* tho' never ſo cloſely link'd to the Subject.

I will not dwell upon ſome ſmall Errors of *Milton*, which are obvious to every

ry Reader, I mean ſome few Contradictions, and thoſe frequent Glances at the *Heathen* Mythology, which Fault by the by is ſo much the more unexcuſable in him, by his having premis'd in his firſt Book that thoſe Divinities were but Devils worſhipp'd under different Names, which ought to have been a ſufficient Caution to him not to ſpeak of the Rape of *Proſerpine*, of the Wedding of *Juno* and *Jupiter*, &c. as Matters of Fact.

I lay aſide likewiſe his prepoſterous and aukward Jeſts, his Puns, his too familiar Expreſſions ſo inconſiſtent with the Elevation of his Genius, and of his Subject.

To come to more eſſential Points and more *liable* to be debated. I dare affirm that the Contrivance of the *Pandæmonium* would have been entirely diſapprov'd of by Criticks like *Boyleau*, *Racine*, &c.

That Seat built for the Parliament of the Devils, ſeems very prepoſterous: Since Satan hath ſummon'd them altogether, and harangu'd them juſt before in an ample Field. The Council was neceſſary; but where it was to be held, *'twas* very indifferent. The Poet ſeems to delight in building his *Pandæmonium* in *Doric* Order with Freeze and Cornice, and a Roof of Gold. Such a Contrivance ſavours more of the wild Fancy of our Father *le Moine* then of the ſeri-

ous Spirit of *Milton*. But when afterwards the Devils turn dwarfs to fill their Places in the Houſe, as if it was impracticable to build a Room large enough to contain them in their natural Size; it is an idle Story which would match the moſt extravagant Tales. And to crown all, Satan and the chief Lords preſerving their own monſtrous Forms, while the Rabble of the Devils ſhrink into Pigmees, heightens the Ridicule of the whole Contrivance to an unexpreſſible Degree. Methinks the true Criterion for diſcerning what is really ridiculous in an *Epick* Poem, is to examine if the ſame Thing would not fit exactly the Mock heroick. Then I dare ſay that nothing is ſo adapted to that ludicrous way of Writing, as the Metamorphoſis of the Devils into Dwarfs.

The Fiction of *Death* and *Sin* ſeems to have in it ſome great Beauties and many groſs Defects. In order to canvaſs this Matter with Order. We muſt firſt lay down that ſuch ſhadowy Beings, as *Death*, *Sin*, *Chaos*, are intolerable when they are not allegorical. For Fiction is nothing but Truth in Diſguiſe. It muſt be granted too, that an Allegory muſt be ſhort, decent, and noble. For an Allegory carried too far or too low, is like a beautiful Woman who wears always a

Maſk.

Maſk. An Allegory is a long Metaphor; and to ſpeak too long in Metaphor's muſt be tireſom, becauſe unnatural. This being premis'd, I muſt ſay that in general thoſe Fictions, thoſe imaginary Beings, are more agreable to the Nature of *Milton*'s Poem, than to any other; becauſe he hath but two natural Perſons for his Actors, I mean *Adam* and *Eve*. A great Part of the Action lies in imaginary Worlds, and muſt *of courſe* admit of imaginary Beings.

Then *Sin* ſpringing out of the Head of Satan, ſeems a beautiful Allegory of Pride, which is look'd upon as the firſt Offence committed againſt God. But I queſtion if *Satan*, getting his Daughter with Child, is an Invention to be approv'd off. I am afraid that Fiction is but a meer Quibble; for if Sin was of a maſculine Gender in *Engliſh*, *as it is in all the other Languages*, that whole Affair Drops, and the Fiction vaniſhes away. But ſuppoſe we are not ſo nice, and we allow Satan to be in Love with *Sin*, *becauſe this Word is made feminine in* Engliſh (as Death paſſes alſo for maſculine) what a horrid and loathſome Idea does *Milton* preſent to the Mind, in this Fiction? *Sin* brings forth Death, this Monſter inflam'd with Luſt and Rage, lies with his Mother, as ſhe had done with her Father. From

that new Commerce, ſprings a Swarm of Serpents, which creep in and out of their Mother's Womb, and gnaw and tear the Bowels they are born from.

Let ſuch a Picture be never ſo beautifully drawn, let the Allegory be never ſo obvious, and ſo clear, ſtill it will be intolerable, on the Account of its Foulneſs. That Complication of Horrors, that Mixture of Inceſt, that Heap of Monſters, that Loathſomeneſs ſo far fetch'd, cannot but ſhock a Reader of delicate Taſte.

But what is more intolerable, there are Parts in that Fiction, which bearing no Allegory at all, have no Manner of Excuſe. There is no Meaning in the Communication between Death and Sin, 'tis diſtaſteful without any Purpoſe; or if any Allegory lies under it, the filthy Abomination of the Thing is certainly more obvious than the Allegory.

I ſee with Admiration, *Sin*, the *Portreſs* of Hell, opening the Gates of the Abiſs, but unable to ſhut them again. that is really beautiful, becauſe 'tis true. But what ſignifies Satan and Death quarrelling together, grinning at one another, and ready to fight?

The Fiction of *Chaos*, *Night*, and *Diſcord*, is rather a Picture, than an Allegory; and for ought I know, deſerves

to

to be approv'd, becauſe it ſtrikes the Reader with Awe, not with Horror.

I know the Bridge built by Death and Sin, would be diſlik'd in *France*. The nice Criticks of that Country would urge againſt that Fiction, that it ſeems too common, and that it is uſeleſs; for Men's Souls want no paved Way, to be thrown into Hell, after their Separation from the Body.

They would laugh juſtly at the Paradiſe of Fools, at the Hermits, Fryars, Cowles, Beads, Indulgences, Bulls, Reliques, toſs'd by the Winds, at St. *Peter*'s waiting with his Keys at the Wicket of Heaven. And ſurely the moſt paſſionate Admirers of *Milton*, could not vindicate thoſe low comical Imaginations, which belong by Right to *Arioſto*.

Now the ſublimeſt of all the Fictions calls me to examine it. I mean the War in Heaven. The Earl of *Roſcommon*, and Mr. *Addiſon* (whoſe Judgment ſeems either to guide, or to juſtify the Opinion of his Countrymen) admire chiefly that Part of the Poem. They beſtow all the Skill of their Criticiſm, and the Strength of their Eloquence, to ſet off that favourite Part. I may affirm, that the very Things they admire, would not be tolerated by the *French* Criticks. The Reader will perhaps ſee with Pleaſure, *in*

what conſiſts ſo ſtrange a Difference, and what may be the Ground of it.

Firſt, they would aſſert, that a War in Heaven being an imaginary Thing, which lies out of the Reach of our Nature, ſhould be contracted in two or three Pages, rather than lengthen'd out into two Books; becauſe we are naturally impatient of removing from us the Objects which are not adapted to our Senſes.

According to that Rule, they would maintain, that 'tis an idle Task to give the Reader the full Character of the Leaders of that War, and to deſcribe *Raphael*, *Michael*, *Abdiel*, *Moloch*, and *Niſroth*, as *Homer* paints *Ajax*, *Diomede* and *Hector*.

For what avails it to draw at length the Picture of theſe Beings, ſo utterly Strangers to the Reader, that he cannot be affected any Way towards them; by the ſame Reaſon, the long Speeches of theſe imaginary Warriors, either before the Battle, or in the Middle of the Action, their mutual Inſults, ſeem an unjudicious Imitation of *Homer*.

The aforeſaid Criticks would not bear with the Angels plucking up the Mountains, with their Woods, their Waters, and their Rocks, and flinging them on the Heads of their Enemies. Such a Contrivance (they would ſay) is the more

more puerile, the more it aims at Greatneſs. Angels arm'd with Mountains in Heaven, reſemble too much the Dipſodes in *Rabelais*, who wore an Armour of *Portland* Stone ſix Foot thick.

The Artillery ſeems of the ſame Kind, yet more trifling, becauſe more uſeleſs.

To what Purpoſe are theſe Engines brought in? Since they cannot wound the Enemies, but only remove them from their Places, and make them tumble down: Indeed (if the Expreſſion may be forgiven) 'tis to play at Nine-Pins. And the very Thing which is ſo dreadfully great on Earth, becomes very low and ridiculous in Heaven.

I cannot omit here, the viſible Contradiction which reigns in that Epiſode. God ſends his faithful Angels to fight, to conquer and to puniſh the Rebels. Go (ſays he, to *Michael* and *Gabriel*)

--------And to the Brow of Heaven
Purſuing, drive them out from God and Bliſs,
Into their Place of Puniſhment, the Gulph
Of Tartarus, *which ready opens wide*
His fiery Chaos to receive their Fall.

How does it come to paſs, after ſuch a poſitive Order, that the Battle hangs doubtful? And why did God the Father command *Gabriel* and *Raphael*, to

do what he executes afterwards by his Son only.

I leave it to the Readers, to pronounce, if theſe Obſervations are right, or ill-grounded, and if they are carried to far. But in caſe theſe Exceptions are juſt, the ſevereſt Critick muſt however confeſs there are Perfections enough in *Milton*, to attone for all his Defects.

I muſt beg leave to conclude this Article on *Milton*, with two Obſervations.

His Hero (I mean *Adam*, his firſt Perſonage) is unhappy. That demonſtrates againſt all the Criticks, that a very good Poem may end unfortunately, in Spight of all their pretended Rules. Secondly, The *Paradiſe-Loſt* ends compleatly. The Thread of the Fable is ſpun out to the laſt. *Milton* and *Taſſo* have been careful of not ſtopping ſhort and abruptly. The one does not abandon *Adam* and *Eve*, till they are driven out of *Eden*. The other does not conclude, before *Jeruſalem* is taken. *Homer* and *Virgil* took a contrary Way, the *Iliad* ends with the Death of *Hector*, the *Æneid* with that of *Turnus*: The Tribe of Commentators have upon that enacted a Law, that a Houſe ought never to be finiſh'd, becauſe *Homer* and *Virgil* did not compleat their own; but if *Homer* had taken *Troy*, and *Virgil* married *Lavinia* to *Æneas*, the

the Criticks would have laid down a Rule juſt the contrary.

Was I ſway'd by the common Affectation of commending our native Country abroad, I would endeavour in this Place, to ſet off to the beſt Advantage, ſome of our *Epick* Poems; but I muſt frankly own, among more than fifty which I have read, there is not one tolerable. Then inſtead of throwing away an unavailable Criticiſm upon ſome wretched *French* Poem, I am reduced to inquire, why we have not a good one; for it ſeems a little ſtrange, that a Nation who boaſts of having ſucceeded ſo well in all the other Parts of Poetry, falls ſo ſhort of herſelf in that Particular.

I have heard the *French* Tongue arraigned in *England* of Inſufficiency, as being neither ſtrong nor lofty enough to reach the Sublimity of *Epick* Poetry.

I am apt to think, that every Language has its own particular Genius, flowing chiefly from the Genius of the Nation, and partly from its own Nature.

On the one Side, more or leſs Liberty in the Government, and in Religion, a more or leſs free Converſation between the two Sexes, the Influence of the firſt Authors, who have written with Succeſs,

ceſs, and whoſe Stile is become the general Standard, all theſe Means have a great Share in determining the Nature of a Language, in making it extenſive or ſtinted, ſtrong or weak, ſublime or low.

On the other Side, the Roughneſs of too many Conſonants, the Softneſs of predominant Vowels, the Length, or the Shortneſs of the Words, more or leſs Articles, and the like, give a ſtrong Biaſs to an Idiom, and render it more or leſs ſuſceptible of ſome particular Ways of Writing.

Thus if we conſider the Softneſs and Effeminacy into which the Luxuriancy of Vowels emaſculates the *Italian* Tongue, and the Idleneſs in which the *Italians* ſpend all their Life, buſy only in the purſuit of thoſe Arts which ſoften the Mind; we muſt not wonder if that Language paſſes (as it were) for the Language of Love.

The Freedom of Society in *France*, and the Turn of the Phraſes, which, as they admit of no Tranſpoſition, are the more perſpicuous, qualify exceedingly the *French* Tongue for Converſation. The former Roughneſs of the *Engliſh* Language, now improv'd into Strength and Energy, its Copiouſneſs, its admitting of many Inverſions, fit it for more ſublime Performances. Beſides, the Force

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of that Idiom is wonderfully heighten'd, by the Nature of the Government, which allows the *Engliſh* to ſpeak in Publick, and by the Liberty of Conſcience, which makes them more converſant in the Scripture, and hath rendered the Language of the Prophets ſo familiar to them, that their Poetry ſavours very much of that *Eaſtern* out of the way Sublimity; nay, ſixty or eighty Years ago, all the Speeches in Parliament were cramm'd with Expreſſions taken from the *Jewiſh* Writings. But ſuch predominant Qualifications of a Language, do not imply an Excluſion of any other Aptitude in it. Lofty Performances have been made in *Italian*. Some *Engliſh* Poets have written gracefully upon Love, and it is not impoſſible for the *French* to have an *Epick* Poem.

The *French* Tongue has Strength and Majeſty enough in *Corneilles* Tragedies. Nay, now and then it ſoars up in his Plays, beyond the true Meaſure of Sublime. Far from wanting Force or Grandeur, I dare affirm it labours under a contrary Defect. And this is a Secret which I unfold willingly. We can hardly expreſs common Things with Felicity in our Heroick Poetry. The Genius of the Nation, and conſequently the Turn of the Language, does not allow us to

come down to the Deſcription of the Trappings of a Horſe, of the Wheels, of a Chariot, &c. We can commend rural Life in General, but not ſpecify, with Dignity, the little Particularities belonging to it. This Taſk, is avoided by all our ſkilful Writers, who are conſcious of the Defectiveneſs of the Language in that reſpect. In ſhort, ſuch is our Diſadvantage, that there is an infinite number of Things, which we dare neither call by their Names, nor expreſs by a Periphraſe. Mr. *Pope*, in his Tranſlation of *Homer*, may without any Riſque, wound a Hero, *where the Bone and the Bladder meet*, or pierce him through the *right Shoulder*. He may ſay after his Original:

------the Dart------pierced a vital Part,
Full in his Face it entered, and betwixt
The Noſe, and the Eye-Ball, the proud Li-
[cian *fixt,*
Craſh'd all his Jaws, and cleft the Tongue
[*within,*
Till the bright Point look'd out beneath the
[*Chin.*

The like Attempt in *French*, would be thought Burleſque. The Fields of Nature lie wide and open for the *Engliſh* to range through at Pleaſure, whilſt we are

are ſtinted and oblig'd to walk with too much Circumſpection.

To this happy Freedom, that the *Britiſh* Nation enjoys in every Thing, are owing many excellent poetical Verſions of the ancient Poets; whereas the *French* are reduced to tranſlate *Virgil*, *Homer*, *Lucretius* and *Ovid* in Proſe.

Mr. *de la Motte*, a Member of the *French* Academy, is the only Man of ſome Reputation, who attempted the *Iliad* in Verſe; but he was forced to contract the four and twenty Books of *Homer*, into twelve, yet thoſe twelve do not contain ſo many Verſes, as four Books of *Homer* do. His *Iliad* is a ſhort Abridgment of the *Greek*, and yet is judg'd to be exceedingly too long.

After all, if that Slavery, if that Coyneſs of the *French* Language, makes it unfit for tranſlating *Homer*, and *Virgil*, yet I do not perceive how that ſhould hinder the Nation from having an *Epick* Poem of her own Growth?

A Poem, methinks, might ſubſiſt very well, without the Help of mechanick, or anatomical Deſcriptions. We rather require of an Author, to excite our Paſſions, to unfold the moſt intricate Receſſes of the Soul, to deſcribe the Cuſtoms of the Nations, to mark the Differences which ariſe in the Characters of Men,

Men, from the different Governments they are born under, in ſhort to ſpeak the Language of the polite World; than to play the Surgeon, the Carpenter, or the Joiner, though never ſo elegantly.

Cardinal of *Rets*, and the Earl of *Clarendon*, in their Memoirs, unravel all the Springs of the Civil Wars, and draw at full Length, the Pictures of thoſe whoſe Ambition ſhook the Foundation of their reſpective Countries. But neither of theſe two great Writers, makes it his particular Care to deſcribe with Accuracy, how ſuch a Colonel was wounded through the Bladder, and ſuch a Captain in the Kidneys. Nor do they throw away their Time in deſcribing elegantly of what Wood the Benches of the Houſe of Parliament were made. Why then ſhould an *Epick* Poet, lie under the Neceſſity of elaborating thoſe Tittle Deſcriptions, which every noble Hiſtorian avoids with Care?

Some impute our Want of an *Epick* Poem, to the Shackles of Rhime. They ſay, that the gingling Return of the ſame Sounds, which are chiming on, in the ſame Stops, Meaſures, Pauſes, without any Variety, or any Relief to the Ear, muſt needs Occaſion an inſupportable Uniformity throughout all the Work. They urge, that Slavery cramps the no-

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bleſt Genius, and a Poet, inſtead of uſing Rhime, as an Ornament ſerviceable to his Senſe, makes his own Thoughts ſubſervient to Rhime.

They add, Rhime is a barbarous *Gothick* Invention, owing to the dull Sprightlineſs of the Monks, and contend that nothing Good can be built with ſo bad a Material.

Firſt, I muſt confeſs we are Slaves to Rhime in *France*, and our Slavery is altogether irretrievable. Nay, all our Tragedies ought to be rhimed. For our Poetry being fetter'd by too ſtrict Rules, admitting of no Inverſions, nor of Verſes incroaching upon one another, would have nothing but Loftineſs of Stile, to diſtinguiſh it from Proſe, if it were not for Rhime. We have no Manner of Pretence to blank Verſe, we muſt keep to Rhime neceſſarily, and whoſoever would attempt to throw off a Burthen which Mr. *Boyleau*, *Racine*, and *Corneille*, have ſo glorioufly ſuſtained, would be thought rather weak than bold, and certainly would meet with a very unkind Reception.

As to that pretended Uniformity, and Tedioufneſs objected againſt Verſes in Rhime, it is not to be found in Authors truly good, of whatſoever Country. *Taſſo* is read with Pleaſure, though all his Verſes,

Verſes, nay, allmoſt all his Syllables, end in *a. e. i. o.* And thoſe who ſay Rhime is an Invention of the Monks of the ſeventh Century, are utterly in the Wrong. All the Nations whoſe Languages are known to us, have Verſes in Rhime, except the *Greeks* and the *Romans*.

The Return of the ſame Sounds, is a Kind of natural Muſick, more obvious to the Ear, and more eaſily reduc'd into an Art, than the *Quantity* of Syllables. It is true, that Diſtinction between long and ſhort Syllables afforded to the *Romans* and *Greeks* an harmonious Variety of Sounds, which by their Quickneſs, or Gravity, were wonderfully expreſſive of the impetuous, or ſlow Motions of the Soul. But we ought not (becauſe we want ſo great an Advantage) to neglect the only one we are in Poſſeſſion of, and in Room of which, we have nothing to ſet up. Shou'd we not manure our own Soil, becauſe ſome others are more fruitful?

After theſe little Hints upon our Language, and our Verſification, I will own, that an *Epick* Poem is a harder Task in *France*, than in any other Country whatever; not purely becauſe we *Rhime*, but becauſe our Rhimes, as well the other Parts of our Verſification, are ty'd down

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to moſt inſupportable and inſignificant Rules; not becauſe our Language wants Loftineſs, but becauſe it wants Freedom. For it is with our Heroick Poetry, as with our Trade, we come up to the *Engliſh* in neither, for want of being a free Nation.

Slavery is generally an Obſtacle to Abundance. Our coy Language is not as copious as it ſhould be. We have diſcarded a Multitude of old energic Expreſſions, the Loſs of which has weakened the Stock of the *French* Tongue, as the compelling our Proteſtants away hath thinned the Nation. The *Engliſh* have naturalized many of our antiquated Words, as they have done our Countrymen, and ſo they have increaſed their Language, as well as their People, at our Expence.

But the greateſt Enemy to *Epick* Poetry in *France*, is the Turn of the Genius of our Nation. It is almoſt impoſſible for us to venture on any Machinery. The antient Gods are exploded out of the World. The preſent Religion cannot ſucceed them among us. The Cherub, and the Seraph, which act ſo noble a Part in *Milton*, would find it very hard to work their Way into a *French* Poem. The very Words of *Gabriel*, *Michael*, *Raphael*, would run a great Hazard of being made a Jeſt off. Our

Saints who make ſo good a Figure in our Churches, make a very ſorry one in our *Epick* Poems. St. *Denis*, St. *Chriſtopher*, St. *Rock*, and St. *Genevieve*, ought to appear in Print no where, but in our Prayer-Books, and in the Hiſtory of the Saints; a noble Volume, which contains more Wonders than any Machinery could afford.

To conclude, the beſt Reaſon I can offer for our ill Succeſs in *Epick* Poetry, is the Inſufficiency of all who have attempted it. I can add nothing further, after this ingenuous Confeſſion.

FINIS.